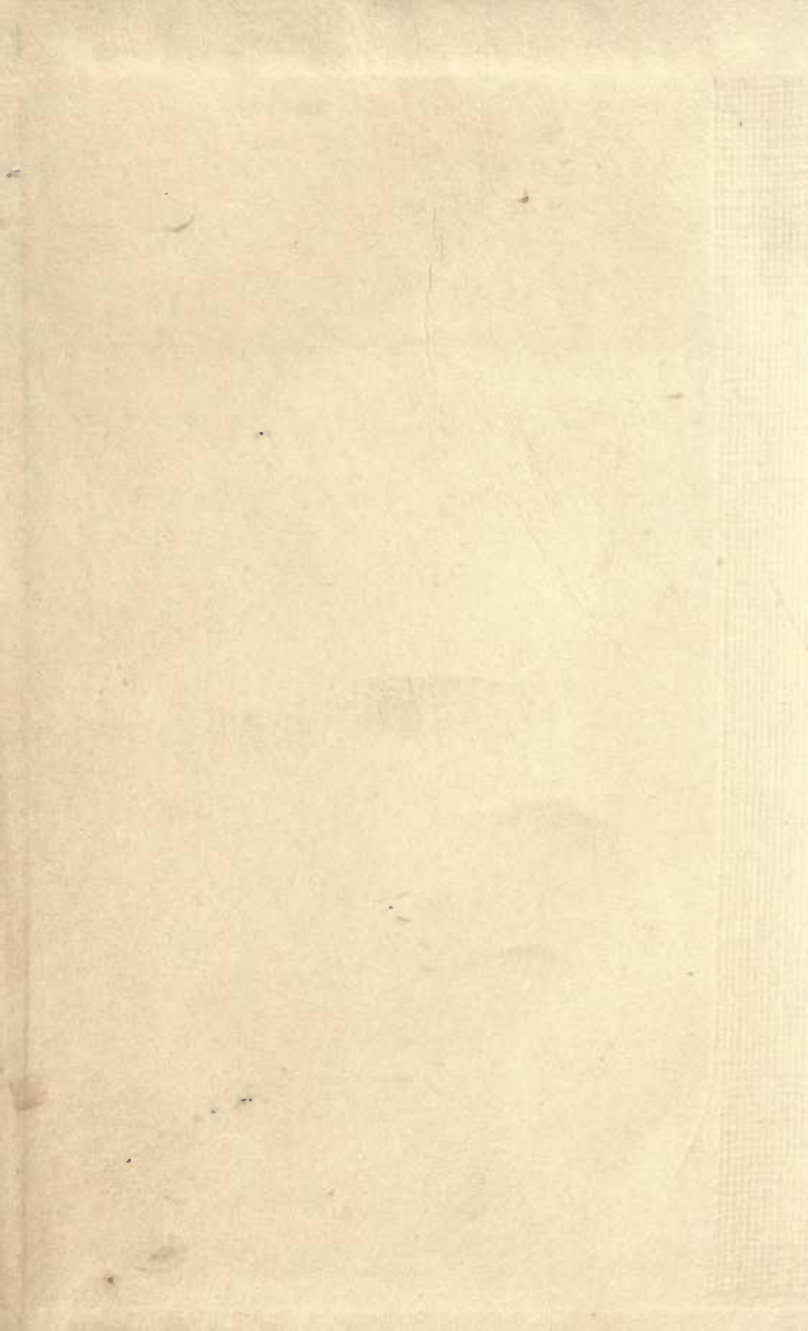
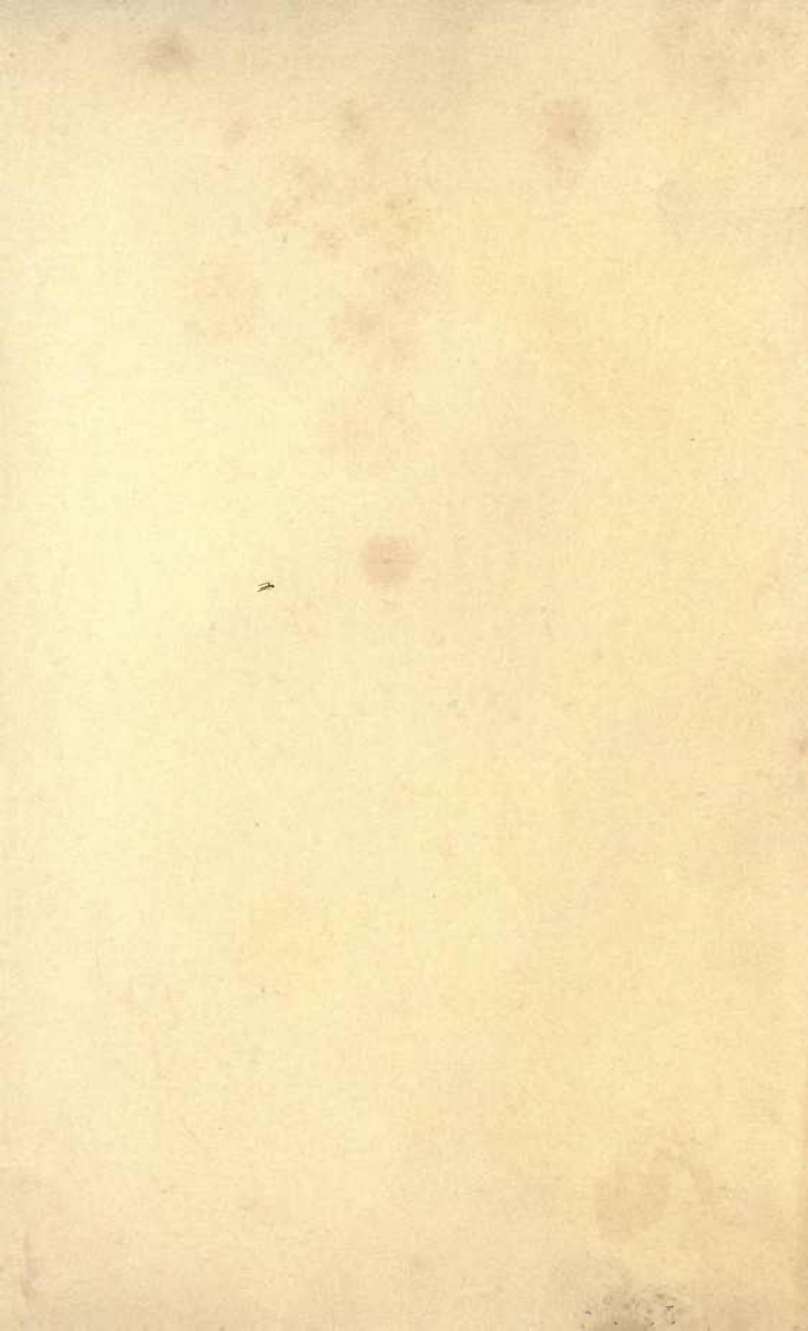


THE RECORDS

·CYRUS·TOWNSEND·BRADY·



1. 26 E. 65





He passed by with Miss Jefferys
on his arm.—Page 24

Frontispiece

The Records

*Being Truthful Accounts, Grave and Gay,
of the Doings of Certain Real People*

*Hereinafter set down for the Edification of the Wise and
the Foolish, and the Amusement of the Tired
and the Unhappy*

BY

CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY

*Author of "The Corner in Coffee," "The Southerners," "A Doctor
of Philosophy," "A Little Traitor to the South," "Sir
Henry Morgan, Buccaneer," etc., etc.*



Illustrations by
LOUIS D. ARATA

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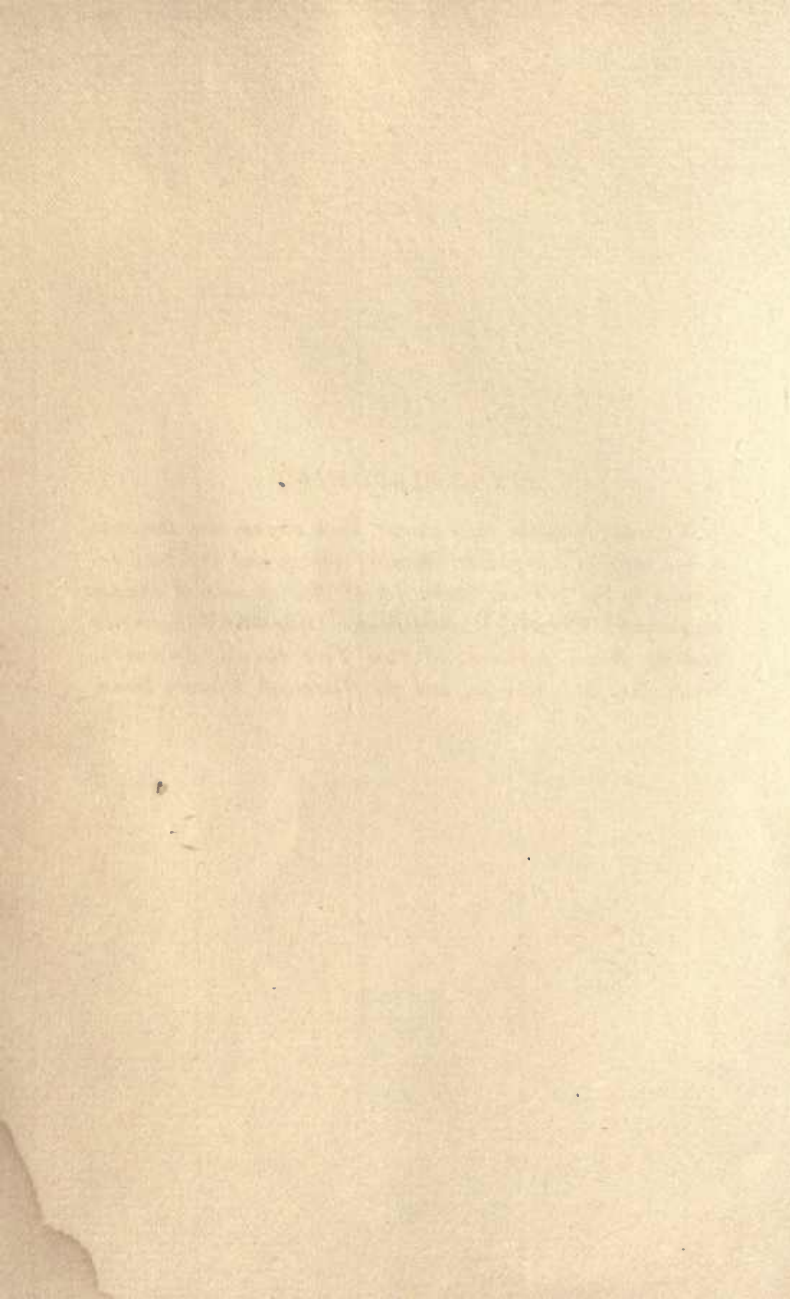
The Records

Issued October, 1904



TO
MARGARET BARRETT CURRAN

2229152



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

With one exception these stories have already seen the light in the different magazines of the country and are here reprinted by the gracious permission of The Associated Sunday Magazines, Century, Cosmopolitan, Delineator, Illustrated Sporting News, Lippincott's, New York Herald, Scribner's, Smart Set, St. Nicholas, and the Twentieth Century Home.

PREFACE

It is said that everybody has at least one good story in him. Perhaps by that is meant that every human life however obscure and humble, possesses elements of tragedy, comedy, and mystery; and if it could be described clearly and properly would in itself be a romance which would meet the requirements of that famous dictum, "Will it make you laugh? Will it make you cry? Will it make you wonder?"

I have not attempted anything so ambitious as the setting forth of a single human life in this book—rather I have tried to put the reader in communication with many lives. Acting on the theory that where there was a certain long story there was also a possible short one, I have made it my business—and it has also been my pleasure!—when I could do so with propriety, to get from various people with whom I have been brought in contact during a diversified life spent in many places and in touch with all sorts and conditions of men—and of women not a few—experiences joyous and sad, episodes tragic and comic, adventures and other happenings, that go to make up life. One or two of the matters discussed are based upon personal experiences, some of them came under my own observation, while others were related to me by persons whose veracity, unlike their stories, is beyond question.

These I have faithfully set down with just enough modification to make them credible, with just enough imagination to supplement and show forth the truth

that is in them. Since there is in nearly every story at least a basis of truth—some of those which appear most improbable, nay, impossible, are absolutely true even to details—I have seen fit to name the collection “The Records.”

The stories have been gathered, as is evident even to a casual inspection, from all parts of the country. My knowledge of them has extended over many years, the writing of them has been done at intervals during a long and busy period.

Lest I should be deemed guilty of using the scalpel of the surgeon, or the knife of the demonstrator, on human experiences in unauthorized ways, it will interest the reader to learn that in most cases the record has been made not only with the permission but often upon the urgency of the person most intimately concerned. No one, it is probable, will be able to identify those people whose doings are here recorded; but, surprising as it may seem, several of the actors in the little tragedies or comedies, as the case may be, have been more than willing to appear in this book under their own proper names!

I have sometimes been accused of writing in haste and repenting at leisure. Certainly such a charge can not be made against me for this book, at least; for I have written it at leisure. I put it forth in the hope that its reception may not cause me to repent of it in haste.

CYRUS TOWNSEND BRADY.

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK, *June 1, 1904.*

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THE RECORDS

First Record

A SYNDICATE HERO*

The fact that persons whose patronymic is Smith usually labor under the added disability of such undistinguishing names as John or William, is the result of one of those forms of parental aberration which shows a profound lack of consideration for the future. Smith isn't a bad name of itself. There is something strong and sturdy about it which suggests Hal of the Wynd, and which goes back very far—even to Tubal Cain. But it is widely diffused, and therefore lacks distinction. Ergo, he is a wise father of Smiths who can differentiate his progeny from the monotonous mass by coupling Smith with something that, being peculiar, identifies, while it also differentiates.

The practice of parting names in the middle is generally reprehended, but if it be ever excusable, it is so in the case of Smith. P. Sigsbee Smith thought so, at any rate, and he possessed none of the qualities usually ascribed to those who bisect a name. He was born in that section of country so little

* By courtesy of "Scribner's Magazine."

known, and less noticed by the East, which lies beyond the Mississippi and which, like the famous tail of the story, will, some day, wag the national dog!

Contrary to the habit of Western youth in good circumstances, he had not been sent East to college, but had been educated at a Western State University, whose diploma meant less, perhaps, than those of the more ancient institutions, but which, nevertheless, covered a multitude of healthy college influences. His father had been a soldier, who had fought with distinction, under Grant, in the Civil War, and had made a good income afterward in law and politics; the small accumulations of which he left to P. Sigsbee, his only surviving descendant.

P. Sigsbee roughed it for a time in the West after the death of his father, and then, by shrewd and judicious investments, increased his original legacy, until it grew to a comfortable fortune—beyond the Mississippi! It was a mere drop in the bucket, he found out, when he came East. He didn't come East to make a greater fortune, or because he was dissatisfied with the West, either, but because of a woman.

Florence Jefferys, whose father owned, or controlled, the great Hamilton railroad system, which gridironed a large part of the West with its tracks, was the cause of P. Sigsbee's defection. In company with hundreds of others, he had met her for one brief half-hour at a reception given her father by the local railroad magnates on one of the General's tours of inspection. P. Sigsbee saw her, was conquered, and

came East forthwith. Florence Jefferys did not know him from Adam, of course, but he was, nevertheless, determined that she should know him, and he was youthful enough, and buoyant enough, and hopeful enough, to believe that with knowledge she could not fail to love him as he loved her—a very Western point of view, indeed!

To come to New York was easy, but to get re-introduced to Florence Jefferys was difficult. The months passed, and he got no nearer to her than the columns of the daily papers, in whose social reviews she often appeared. He was a resourceful youth, or he would never have thought to patronize a "Press Clipping Bureau" for accounts of her doings! Realizing, at last, that a long, hard campaign would be needed, he decided to settle in New York for good. He was a tenacious man, and what he determined, he determined.

He had studied law, for which he had no fancy or faculty, so he hung out his shingle in one of the poorer down-town districts—more to justify himself for doing nothing, than for anything else—and proceeded to camp on the trail of Miss Jefferys. It led him in the summer to Bar Harbor, where her father owned one of those palaces of pleasure modestly disguised under the name of a "cottage."

P. Sigsbee was a good-looking young man, and as he dressed well and had the good luck to make the acquaintance of one or two old army friends of his father, he at last achieved a slight acquaintance with his divinity. If not heart-whole and fancy free, she

was yet unengaged, for the papers, he was sure, would have announced an engagement long since.

There were not many available young men at Bar Harbor so early in the season. At least they did not bear any proper proportion to the available young women, and P. Sigsbee progressed somewhat in his acquaintanceship with the young lady, although he could not flatter himself that he made any deep impression upon her heart. There seemed no way of advancing himself in the affair, and in dismay he was conscious at last that the summer was waning without bringing to him the desired results. As it wore on, more available people of the masculine persuasion came to the island, and Miss Jefferys got farther from him than ever.

Among his acquaintances was a young man named Lutterworth. Lutterworth was an ambitious young fellow, of good family, and better parts, who was the special correspondent of a syndicate of New York, Boston and Philadelphia papers, as well as the representative of the Associated Press at Bar Harbor. They were congenial spirits, these two, and in a moment of desperation, P. Sigsbee confided his situation to the other.

"What you want, P. S.," said the sage Lutterworth, after reflecting deeply upon the confidence of his friend, "is to get yourself before the public in some way. You want to be a hero, create a sensation, shine out as doing something startling. Get yourself talked about, you know, for courage and daring, and so on. Those things," oracularly, "ap-

peal to a woman"—he was twenty-two and knew it all! "Get 'em talking about you. Now, if you can only suggest some sort of a sensation, I'll work it up in the papers for all it is worth."

"Yes," answered P. Sigsbee, disconsolately, "I suppose so. But where's the sensation to come from? Hang it all, I'm willing to do anything that a man can do. But what is there to do? I can ride a broncho, or rope a long-horn, or shoot a pipe out of your mouth from across the road, but these things don't seem to go here. I don't believe there's a cayuse or a steer on the island. And that's about all I'm good for."

He had quite forgotten his college degree and his law office, it seemed, but of what avail were they in winning a woman's heart!

"No," said Lutterworth thoughtfully, "there's not much chance for the display of such rare and valuable talents in this locality. Yet these things should be worth something, P. S. Ah, I have it!" he suddenly exclaimed, light breaking in upon him. "The very thing! What was it you were telling me yesterday about a row on the *Tennessee*?"

"It wasn't much of a row."

"At any rate, let's have it. Perhaps I may do something with it."

"Well, you see, since General Grant died the other day, all the naval officers have been wearing crape as a badge of mourning. I was visiting the flag-ship with some young ladies, and somehow we began to discuss the dead general. You know he

was one of father's friends, and has always been a hero of mine. That man, Sluman, you know, that little whiffet that's on the Admiral's staff—how such a man as the Admiral could put him, or keep him, on his staff is more than I can tell——”

“Yes, yes, but go on.”

“That little ass made some remarks concerning Grant which were highly derogatory—insulting I called them. It made me mad, especially as he was wearing crape for Grant at the time, so I took him aside and told him forcibly that if he made any more talk like that in my presence, I'd knock his head off, if I had to do it before the whole ship's company. I believe I'd have done it right then and there, as it was, but you see the young ladies were present.”

“Um!” returned Lutterworth. “Did they hear what you said?”

“I suppose so. I didn't speak so low as I should have done, perhaps.”

“I think I can make something out of that story. All you have to do is to back me up in whatever I say, and we'll set afloat a bigger sensation than the old flagship herself.”

“What are you going to do?”

“Never mind,” answered the resourceful Lutterworth, “I'll fix it up all right.”

“I'd hate to be laughed at.”

“You'll be admired, envied, adored! Leave it to me.”

"Well, go ahead," at last assented P. Sigsbee, not entirely easy in his mind, however.

The next morning there was a brief despatch in the Associated Press reports to the effect that one of the officers of the North Atlantic Squadron, then on its annual summer cruise to Bar Harbor, had spoken in a manner derogatory to the memory of General Grant; and that a prominent summer sojourner had taken exception to the officer's remarks, and had sent him a challenge to fight a duel. In the special correspondence to the metropolitan dailies which Lutterworth represented there was a fuller and more explicit account of the row, with the additional information that the challenger was a Western man whose father had served under and had been a friend of the great general.

They were innocent-looking little paragraphs, but they excited a great deal of attention. It was summer and there was not much doing in the country at large. The item was widely read and commented upon with avidity.

The arrival of the papers made a sensation on the island as well. A little thing stirs up a summer colony, and this was apparently a great one. As soon as he read the notice, P. Sigsbee, in great perturbation, posted off to find Lutterworth.

"See here," he exclaimed. "You blamed idiot, what does all this mean? You'll get me into no end of trouble."

"Keep cool, old man," said Lutterworth, imperturbably. "It's all right. You let me work it out

in my own way. You are not afraid to fight a duel, are you?"

"Fight a duel? Of course not! I've looked into the mouth of a loaded pistol more than once. I'm not afraid of anything but being made a fool of. But this will never do at all."

"It'll work; you see if it doesn't. Besides, it's just beginning."

"What are you going to do now?"

"I'm going to interview you."

"Not by a——"

"Hold on! Yes, I am. Let me see. You sent a challenge off to young Sluman. Now the question is, what did he do?"

"But I didn't send a challenge, you idiot!"

"I know, I know. But in this story you did. What do you think he would do in that case?"

"Well, if I'm a judge of a sneak, he'd try to get out of it."

"Exactly. But how?"

"I don't know. But you addle-headed——"

"Don't call names. Let me think. I'll make him decline it as against the rules of the service. That's first-rate. Now, one other question. What would you do under such circumstances?"

"You'll drive me crazy. I tell you the circumstances are impossible."

"But if they were possible?"

"Well I suppose if I were fool enough to get into such a scrape I'd brand him as a coward, and threaten to shoot him on sight."

“Good! Splendid! Great head! What would he do, then?”

“Anyone who wasn’t an utter abject craven would take me up then, I suppose, but——”

“Good again. Everything is going along delightfully. He accepts your challenge. Yes, you can fight in Green Mountain Gorge. That would be a beautiful place for a fight, so wild, so romantic.”

“I’ll tell you one thing, Lutterworth. If you keep on there will be a shooting match, and it won’t be in Green Mountain Gorge, either, and you’ll be the victim.”

“P. S., if you don’t bless me for this until the end of your life, after I get through, you can shoot me on sight. Now, go, my boy—hold on, though! Those yarns about your prowess, riding bronchos, shooting pipes, all that stuff. Is that straight goods?”

“True as Gospel, but——”

“All right. Get out!”

“Lutterworth, you’re a fool! You’ll ruin me,” said P. Sigsbee, turning away in despair.

The next morning the papers contained an interview with the challenger, whose name, however, fortunately for P. Sigsbee’s peace of mind, was not given. The affair was cleverly exploited further. A challenge had been sent and declined by the naval officer on the plea that the customs of the service prevented his acceptance. The challenger thereupon had declared his intention of publicly branding the other man as a coward and shooting him on sight.

At that the naval officer had accepted the challenge, seconds had been named, one of whom was a prominent young literary man—Lutterworth wanted to get a little personal glory out of his magnificent inventions—a meeting had been appointed to take place in Green Mountain Gorge the next morning. After these preliminaries had been settled, it was stated that the Admiral had somehow got wind of the affair and peremptorily confined the young officer to his ship.

The excitement was increasing. Lutterworth had handled the case most brilliantly. His telegrams told just enough to pique curiosity to the highest point. It was the sensation of the hour. Staid old veterans of the late war, such as by good fortune General Jefferys happened to be, discussed the affair over their cigars, and while they all deprecated the practice of duelling, they were delighted to find some one willing to fight to defend the memory of the dead commander. Fair damsels exchanged impressions and lauded the heroic challenger to the skies—"So romantic! So gallant, you know!"

Lutterworth received a frantic telegram every half hour during the morning, asking for more particulars. When P. Sigsbee found him in his room after the arrival of the papers, he was chuckling with glee.

"What did I tell you, old man? This is the sensation of the day."

"It is," grimly assented P. Sigsbee. "Too much of a sensation for me. Thank the Lord nobody iden-

tifies me with it yet. If they did I should be the laughing stock of the town."

"Not you. You don't know these Eastern people. Besides, before to-morrow you *will* be identified with it."

"You are not going to interview me again?"

"No, indeed. I will now make a formal request of you for an interview——"

"Which I decline to grant, at once."

"Of course, that's the proper thing for you to do now. I am going to find out your name from some other source."

"I forbid you," wrathfully.

"Oh, keep cool!"

"You can't get my name from any other source, anyway. No one——"

"Oh, yes, I can," said Lutterworth, teasingly.

"What source?"

"Who were those young ladies who were with you on that ship that day you talked to Sluman?"

"I shall not tell you."

"Well, I have found out without your help."

"Who told you?"

"They did themselves. They are more than willing to talk of this affair. One is Miss Johnson, the other Miss Rivers. Miss Rivers, whom I know very well, told me she was sure you were the man. I met these young ladies last night and they dared me to deny it."

"You didn't deny it, of course?"

"Certainly not."

"What did you do?"

"I made them swear secrecy as to the officer's name."

"Oh, they knew that, too?"

"Yes. I don't want anybody to get into trouble over this affair, although that man deserves it, I declare. I think those girls will keep quiet about him, all right. But they are certain to tell your name."

"Great Heavens! What have you done for me?"

"The best thing in your life. Just wait until I am through with you. Miss Rivers is an intimate friend of Colonel Winsor's daughter. Colonel Winsor is an old friend of General Jefferys. Fannie Winsor is one of Florence Jeffery's boon companions——"

"See here, Lutterworth, when you speak of that young woman, please refer to her as 'Miss Jefferys.'"

"Oh, Lord, you're hit hard! Well, *Miss Rivers* told *Miss Winsor*. *Miss Winsor* told her father, her father told General Jefferys. *Miss Winsor* also told *Miss Jefferys*. There was a dinner party given there last night and they were all talking about it. General Jefferys said you were a fool to fight a duel, but he'd like to meet you just the same. *Miss Jefferys* said you were a hero to defend General Grant, and said further, that she had met you, and that you were a man."

"You don't say so!" joyfully grabbing the other man's hands. "Lutterworth, old man——"

"I told you to let me alone and I'd fix you all

right. Now go away and leave me. You have refused to be interviewed. That's all I want."

At the hotel when he went back, P. Sigsbee found an invitation to a lawn party given that evening at the Jefferys cottage. He went, of course, and had a happy time. Although, when taxed by his fair hostess, he denied up and down that he had sent any challenge and he repeated his denial to General Jefferys, who condescended to notice him during the evening, he was not believed. Besides, P. Sigsbee could not deny, in the face of the testimony of the Misses Rivers and Johnson, that he had been in the flag-ship, and had reproved the officer—name still undeclared—for defaming the memory of the dead general. That was enough.

He made more progress in his wooing in that one evening than he had hoped to achieve in years. Florence Jefferys really distinguished him by her cordiality, and on his departure he received from both her father and herself an invitation to call, which set him in the seventh heaven. All he wanted was an opportunity—he was a well-bred, likeable, admirable fellow—and Lutterworth had given him that. He resolved to embrace it in spite of the fact that his conscience troubled him greatly.

Lutterworth was at the lawn fête, too. So was the Admiral. So also were a number of officers on his staff, all earnestly denying that there was any truth whatever in the yarn. Lutterworth and the Misses Johnson and Rivers observed with glee that Ensign Sluman turned pale as death when P. Sigs-

bee, supremely unconscious of his presence, passed by with Miss Jefferys on his arm. He at once excused himself from further attendance on the Admiral, on the plea of illness, and fled to the ship. He had already had a miserable time in a desperate endeavor to divert suspicion from himself in the wardroom.

Lutterworth left the party early in order to get his special correspondence off in time for the next day. As he walked down the road he was overtaken by the Admiral with two of his young officers. They were riding in one of the buckboards indigenous to the island, and when they overhauled the young man trudging along in the dust and darkness they hospitably invited him to a vacant seat.

"Mr. Lutterworth," said the Admiral, "you know pretty much all that is going on in these latitudes. Tell me how that absurd story originated? That duel affair, you know."

"I know no more than is contained in the reports, sir," promptly answered Lutterworth, with a strict regard for the truth and very tactfully as well.

"Lies, all of them! I'd like to get my hands on the swab that wrote 'em!" exclaimed young Wrightson, truculently, from the front seat.

The situation began to get interesting for Lutterworth. Suppose these bloodthirsty warriors found out that he——?

"It's an infernal outrage, a slander on the whole navy, that's what it is!"

"I am going to find out about it. To-morrow I

shall be in possession of the facts," said the Admiral, sternly. "I telegraphed to some of my friends in New York to go around to the papers and get the name of the correspondent. If I catch him I will make it hot for him. He ought to be keelhauled. You know him, I suppose?"

"I only know what is in the papers, Admiral," answered the youngster boldly, but not feeling very happy.

"Well, we shall all know in the morning. By the way, we are having a reception on the flag-ship tomorrow from ten to twelve. You know the fleet sails in the afternoon. We shall be glad to welcome you, Mr. Lutterworth."

"Thank you, I'll be there, sir," said Lutterworth, gamely, making an excuse to leave them as he did so.

Well, he was in for it, anyway, they would surely find out, and he might as well have as much fun as he could before he was caught. So he rushed off to his office, composed himself in spite of the threatening exposure and went to work on his despatches. Fortunately, P. Sigsbee was not invited to the ship.

The next morning the duel sensation of Mt. Desert was further exploited. It was announced that two of the belles of the island had overheard a portion of the conversation and the name of the young man who had offered the challenge was Mr. P. Sigsbee Smith, formerly of Colorado, now a resident of New York. Here followed a glowing account of Smith, and his prowess with deadly weapons. He was characterized as one of the finest products of the United

States combining the freedom and courage of the West with the culture and refinement of the East. His removal to New York was dwelt upon, and, as a final Napoleonic touch of Lutterworth's daring genius, P. Sigsbee was announced as a prominent Republican candidate for Congress in the down-town district in which he resided, that fall. There was a lot more about the situation, consisting of interviews, real or fictitious, from some very important men, who, without committing themselves to the approval of the duel, commended the young man's bold defence of the memory of General Grant. There was also a modest denial of the report, purporting to come from P. Sigsbee himself, which was so cunningly worded by the ingenious Lutterworth, that it carried conviction to everybody that the story was true.

The papers and the answer to the Admiral's inquiries got to the flag-ship at the same time. Lutterworth, first of the reception guests, arrived soon after. The officers, except Sluman, who was so ill he had to go on the sick list, and was confined to his cabin, had arranged a warm reception for that young man. He had wit enough to imagine the situation, and was prepared for defence. As he nonchalantly stepped through the gangway he was met by a delegation headed by Wrightson. The threatening appearance of that young man and his comrades boded ill for the correspondent.

"Mr. Lutterworth——" he roared out, savagely, shaking his fist in the young man's face.

“ Ah, Mr. Wrightson,” suavely answered Lutterworth, turning to the gangway, “ allow me, Miss Rivers and Miss Johnson! ”

There could be no fighting in the presence of ladies, and Lutterworth with a devotion he rarely manifested, took care not to leave them for a moment. He resisted the most pressing invitations to go below just a moment for a drink, a word, for any purpose. At last he and his two friends left the ship together with the first of the guests to depart. Wrightson would have given a month's pay to have gone with him, too. It cannot be denied that Lutterworth was a genius.

The sailing orders of the Admiral were imperative and the ship got under way at twelve o'clock, carrying from the harbor a fine body of young officers who thirsted for an opportunity to go ashore and interview Lutterworth, and, incidentally, P. Sigsbee Smith, as well. There was one among them, however, who watched the rocky shores of the island fade into the distance with feelings of relief too great to be imagined.

That fall two things happened to P. Sigsbee Smith. One was his election to Congress on the strength of his bold defence of General Grant, which many new-found advocates worked to the last limit in a swift red-hot campaign in his district! The other, just after his election, was his marriage to Miss Florence Jefferys, with the full approval of the old general himself. Lutterworth was his best man at the wedding, as he had been his right-hand man in the cam-

paign. As P. Sigsbee Smith frankly acknowledged, if it had not been for that brilliant and audacious youngster, neither of the successes would have come to him. His wife still believes him a hero, in spite of the fact that he told her the truth before they were married. She had loved him at first for the dangers she thought he had evoked; after that she loved him for himself alone—at least that is what she said, and P. Sigsbee believed her, too!

Second Record

HOW "THE KID" WENT OVER THE RANGE *

There had been a quarrel between them, a lover's quarrel over a trivial matter unworthy a second thought. Most lovers' quarrels have about as much foundation as theirs. Whatever the ethics of the situation, it was sufficiently painful to fill both of them with misery. On the principle of so bearing herself that the other party should suffer the more in any quarrel, Miss Josephine Cooper, deliberately disregarding several tentative efforts at reconciliation—which Lieutenant William Barnard, 12th Cavalry, U.S.A., being the injured party and the masculine, felt that it was only proper he should make—coolly ordered her horse, asked Captain McCauley to assist her to mount, and prepared to ride away.

Before she did so, she flashed one look at Barnard hovering disconsolately near with a mien as profoundly abject as even the most self-willed woman could desire. Fortunately for him, he caught the glance of the sparkling blue eye, and seemed to find something encouraging there, although it was patent a moment later that the wish was father to the supposition.

* By courtesy of "Ess Ess Publishing Co."

At any rate, he stepped to her side, and, under pretense of adjusting the stirrup strap, detained her for a few moments—an attention to which she had no inward objection, be it said.

“Josephine ——” he began.

“I think you would better say ‘Miss Cooper’—after last night,” she interrupted, coldly.

“I wish to apologize,” he went on, unheeding; “it’s all my own fault. I was all wrong. I’m a beast.”

He had not been, and he was not, but that was what the girl wanted him to say, nevertheless. Her heart throbbed with delight as he spoke, but, because she felt guilty herself, she concluded he had not yet had punishment enough.

“I accept your apology, Mr. Barnard, although no apology can ever restore matters to—er—the former footing. Good morning.”

She lifted the reins, but he caught the bridle and detained her.

“Oh, don’t say that!” he pleaded. “Surely, you were a little to blame yourself.”

He was a profoundly politic young man, but this bad move was due to his agitation lest she should escape him.

“Not at all, sir,” replied the girl, with a great show of spirit. “Take your hand off the bridle at once!”

“At least——” he urged, desperately, “don’t go out alone.”

“Why not?”

"I don't know, but I fear——"

"'A soldier and afeared?'" she quoted, laughing without merriment.

"'Afeared' for you, Josephine."

"Nonsense, Mr. Barnard! What is there to be afraid of? There are no Indians except tame ones and dead ones for a hundred miles. The most unpleasant object I am likely to encounter during the day could not be so bad as yourself, sir. I'm going for a canter. Will you release my horse?"

He made no movement to let go the bridle. She lifted the little raw-hide whip he had given her.

"Great heavens!" he gasped, staring at her. "You wouldn't strike me?"

"Of course not, but the horse. Will you let him go? Thank you. Good morning."

She cantered off over the open toward the wood which bordered the river, leaving the lieutenant biting his lips in futile annoyance.

"Hello!" said the little bishop, looking up as the young man stamped his foot, and muttered something which was decidedly unecclesiastical. "What's the matter, Barnard?"

"Nothing, sir."

"Where is Josephine?"

"Gone off yonder."

"Oho!" said the bishop. "You have had a difference, have you? I see."

"Yes, sir. My cursed—I beg your pardon, sir—temper——"

"Ye-es," remarked the bishop sapiently. "I sup-

pose so. I've seen this sort of thing before. You can tell her it was your temper, but you needn't be particular to inform me. Never mind; she'll come back safely, presently."

"But I don't like to see her riding over this country alone, sir."

"What could happen to her?" asked the old man.

"Nothing that I know of."

"There are no hostiles around here now, are there?"

"Not one," answered Captain McCauley, joining in the conversation. "I don't know anything that could possibly happen to her. She is quite safe. There are no wild animals here and she has a revolver in her holster. I saw to that, and she knows how to handle it, too. Bishop, it's just a lover's apprehension on Barnard's part. I wish he'd show as much interest in his company back at Fort Kinney."

"Suppose you follow her, Barnard," suggested the bishop, "I've no doubt she would be more than willing to have you overtake her."

"Not I!" replied that young man, moodily. "She wouldn't speak to me if I did, and I'd better keep away from her a little, I think."

"Very well," answered the old man, "McCauley and I are going fishing. Come along."

"Do you think she could get lost?" asked Barnard, as Captain McCauley scrambled to his feet and got ready to join the bishop.

"Of course not," answered that veteran. "She

has been on the plains before. She has only to keep watch of the sun, or, at worst, to follow the river. Come along, Barnard. Don't be a jack over that girl! She's all right. Better join us for a day's fishing. There's nothing so good for a man in a—certain condition, as fishing. He can sit and moon over the water all day with his thoughts elsewhere, and be perfectly happy, thinking he is occupied and not wasting time. It looks cloudy over there, doesn't it, bishop?"

"Yes," answered the bishop, "it ought to be a good day for fishing. Come along, Barnard; the weather will accord with your emotions."

So, with laughter and gentle raillery, they took the disconsolate lover with them to the river. The bishop was enjoying one of his rare vacations, and Captain McCauley, an old friend, had invited him to spend as much time as he could at old Fort Kinney, in Northern Wyoming. The bishop had brought with him Miss Josephine Cooper, one of the Bethany College girls, who had graduated that year, and who wanted to see something of the life in the mountains before she returned to Philadelphia. As the bishop and her parents were old-time friends, they were willing that he should take her along. All the eligible young officers at Fort Kinney had promptly fallen in love with Miss Josephine, but Barnard seemed to be in higher favor than the rest.

Toward the close of the bishop's visit, McCauley, who was a bachelor, had made up a party for a fishing and hunting expedition down the Powder River

Valley. Barnard, who was his junior lieutenant, had been invited, and Josephine Cooper, accompanied by Mrs. Maloney, the wife of Sergeant Maloney, who was in charge of the soldiers and servants of the party, had gone along too. They had enjoyed a delightful time, and were preparing to return the following day, when the unfortunate quarrel between Josephine and Barnard cast a cloud over the happiness of both.

Barnard's misery, as he followed the others down to the river, however, was more than matched by Josephine's regret. Why had she been so perverse? He had apologized, admitted that he was wrong when he had not been, when she really was to blame; therefore, she might have forgiven him without loss of dignity or prestige, in which case he would have been with her, and she would not have been loping along under the trees alone. Not that she was afraid of anything, but there was no particular fun in riding alone, and she wished she could call him to her. She checked her horse and furtively glanced back, but she saw Barnard following the bishop and the captain toward the river away from her.

"Fishing!" she murmured to herself, "that's how much he cares for me! That's all men care for anyway—killing something, or breaking some woman's heart! Get up, Dick!"

She laid her whip lightly on the neck of the big cavalry horse, and the well-trained animal instantly sprang into a long sweeping gallop which carried her over the country at a great pace. He was not

exactly a lady's horse—there were none at the post—but she was a good enough horsewoman to manage him thoroughly, and she rather enjoyed the big, rangy trooper.

Just before she entered the thick of the wood, she turned back for one more look. The camp, with its Sibley tents and big, canvas-covered wagons, shone brilliantly white in the green of the landscape, and Bridget Maloney's red petticoat, as she busied herself over the remains of the breakfast, added a bright dash of color to relieve the white. The sergeant and his helpers, the drivers and others, were lounging around the camp, but the three other men had vanished.

The country in which Josephine found herself was sufficiently beautiful to compensate—so far as the absence of humanity can ever be compensated for by nature—for her solitude. Before her and close at hand, for the camp had been made among the foothills, rose the gigantic peaks of the Big Horn Range. It was summer, but the tops of the mountains were covered with banks of snow which fairly blazed in the brilliant sunlight. She had been steadily ascending since leaving the camp, and she could look back for miles over scenery peculiarly wild, rugged and desolate.

Great rocky buttes rose here and there around her, and sometimes the expanse of the country was broken by clumps of trees or level, grass-covered masses of rocks like that in which the camp was made. The winding course of the river as it meandered toward

the distant plateau, which resembled the prairies of the bishop's diocese, was indicated by trees at all levels. In front of her, the mountains rose black, awe-inspiring and grand. The influence of their majesty and calm gradually stole over her. A quarrel, even a great one, in the presence of these tremendous manifestations of nature, seemed trivial, petty; and a little disagreement, such as had parted the lovers this morning, was of no consequence whatever.

She checked her horse, and would have turned back; but reflecting that Barnard had gone fishing, she concluded to go forward over the foothills for a nearer look at those great mountains. She determined to forgive him as soon as she might see him. Nay, she would even admit that she had been in the wrong, not he. Having reached this happy conclusion, she felt immensely relieved, and gave herself with unalloyed pleasure to the enjoyment of the marvellous scenery. There was something in the situation entrancing to the Eastern girl, who, except for her four years at Bethany, had seen little of the West. She had come to Bethany only because her parents wished her to have the benefit of the bishop's care, as many other Eastern girls had received it. She rode on, therefore, threading her way among rocky buttes, galloping over stretches of grassy sward, plunging through bits of forest, forcing her horse across some narrow, shrunken stream, giving no thought whatever to time, distance or direction, and ever climbing higher and higher up the slope.

Her eyes were fixed on the changing panorama of mountains before her as her tortuous course brought mighty peaks into successive view. She was fascinated.

The stillness was perfect. The solitude was absolute. There was nothing to disturb the current of her thoughts until she was suddenly awakened by a peal of thunder. It had been growing darker for some time, but she had not noticed it. She looked back quickly, and saw that the sky was heavily overcast. She had been long enough in the West to recognize the signs of a cyclone. It had developed with astonishing rapidity, and seemed about to burst upon her. What should she do?

Before her rose a lofty and threatening mass of rock. On the other side of it, possibly, she might find shelter of some kind. Her first thought, of course, had been to ride toward the camp, but, in the haze of that approaching cyclone, she could not see it, and she no longer knew in what direction it lay. This would have given her great uneasiness had not her thoughts been centered upon the storm. She could look for the camp later; now, she must seek shelter. Under the lee of the great rock she might find a hiding-place.

The horse, as if sharing her apprehension, had been pawing the ground uneasily, and welcomed the shake of the reins and the word which sent him toward the rock. It was, perhaps, half a mile distant, and the way was fairly clear. She looked at her watch. It was just eleven o'clock. She had

been gone nearly four hours, therefore. They had breakfasted early, and she had started early from the camp, and the horse was somewhat tired, but she fairly raced him over that ground. Just as she gained the rock, the storm broke upon her.

There was not a tree in her vicinity. There was nothing that the cyclone could take hold of, so it passed harmlessly over her head with a terrific roaring that nearly frightened her to death. What might have happened to her had she not gained the shelter of that huge rock, she could see by the way the storm tore up trees farther away in its path.

After the wind had spent itself, down came the rain. Such was the storm's violence that she waited for some time, thinking it would break, but, at the end of a half-hour, there were no indications whatever of a cessation. It was now noon, and she was tired and hungry. It required some hardihood for her to leave the shelter of the rock, and battle with the rain, and she waited a few moments longer. She wished more than ever for the presence of Barnard. But something had to be done. She could not remain there forever. She doubted if any one could find her without a long, exhaustive search. She must get back of her own motion. How to do that was a question while the rain kept up.

At last, she walked her horse out into the open, and looked in the direction whence she supposed she had come. The view was hidden in a black whirl of driving rain. She could neither see nor hear the river.

It had been her intention to make for it and then, so far as she could—for the Powder River up there was a wild, mountain stream, often tearing through cliffs and cañons, which would prevent any one from reaching its banks—to follow its general course down the mountain, until she reached the camp. That was the only intelligent course. Now, even that could not be done—at least, not in this rain.

It dawned upon her at last, as she sat on her shivering horse, drenched to the skin, that she was lost. She could scarcely see the top of the great rock that had sheltered her from the mist and rain. These weather conditions were rather unusual, but were, nevertheless, a painful fact to her. What could she do? She was utterly bewildered. Yet she could not remain still. She shook the reins over the horse's neck, and spoke to him. He turned, and slowly made his way forward. Going anywhere was better than standing still, for she had become so nervous that it was impossible for her to remain long in one place. She would let the horse choose, since she had lost all sense of direction.

The horse proceeded carefully, picking his way, at first, but finally he seemed to strike some sort of a trail. She had heard that there were no settlements nearer than Fort Caspar, toward which the military road from Fort Kinney led southward. Yet, as she rode on, by bending low over the saddle she could see marks of a trail. It was an ascending trail; they were going upward, but certainly not in the direction of the camp; and yet, if that were a trail, it must

lead somewhere, it must have been made by a human being. There had been some effort, apparently, to put this way in a rough condition for a horse to travel. As she progressed, she grew more certain of this fact.

So absorbed was she in her speculations, that she did not notice that it was growing lighter. In fact, the rain had ceased almost as suddenly as it had begun, and, although the mists still hung low, it was evident that they were thinning also. She was irresolute as to what to do, but, seeing the trail more clearly, she now concluded the best thing was to keep on jogging ahead. By-and-bye the sun came out, and the mist disappeared with astonishing rapidity. As soon as she could see about her, she checked the horse, and surveyed the scene.

She was in the midst of a rocky pass. The scenery was rugged and grand beyond description. Far below her, the river rushed madly to the southward through a deep, gloomy cañon. Far above her, on either side, towered huge walls of rock. The trail led along the face of the cliff, and a few feet ahead of her bent around a bold escarpment, and was lost. It was a steadily contracting trail. Before her it narrowed so that two horses could not pass. As she looked back, she could see nothing familiar. She had wandered into this great rift in the mountains—from where she knew not, how, she knew not. She might follow the trail back again, but whither it would lead her she had no idea; certainly, not to the camp.

It was long past noon now—one o'clock, she found, by looking at her watch. It would be hours before she could hope to reach the camp, if she ever reached it. Somebody must live at the end of that trail. She hesitated a moment or two, then decided to go forward. It would be perilous to pass around that narrow, jutting precipice, but it would be almost as perilous for her to go back. She shuddered as she saw the dangerous way over which she had come in the mist and rain. The horse had carried her safely thus far. She would trust him farther.

She wanted to see what was around that projecting buttress of rock, anyway, so she urged her horse cautiously on. It was narrower than she had imagined. Where the trail turned, her shoulder actually brushed against the overhanging cliff. She shut her eyes, and repressed a desire to scream. The horse went so slowly and carefully that he scarcely seemed to move. She repented of her action. Why had she come? If he stepped on a loose stone, if his foot slipped, they would both go to their death over that precipice, hundreds of feet below. Mr. Barnard would never know how much she had loved him, how sorry she had been, that she would have been his willingly, that—the horse stopped!

She opened her eyes. They had turned the cliff. The trail widened before her, and she stood in safety on a little shoulder of the mountain as wide as a street. Before her was spread out one of the most enchanting pictures she had ever seen. The trail dropped gently down the slope into a beautiful val-

ley, through which the river ran. The valley "pocket" or "hole" as such things were called out there—was two or three miles long, perhaps a mile wide at its greatest width, and was literally surrounded by towering walls of barren, unbroken rock. At the other end, a waterfall plunged down a precipice that must have been a thousand feet high, forming the source of the river, which ran purling through the level surface of the valley till it entered the cañon. The area before her was dotted with trees. There were houses in the clearing, the smoke from chimneys floated softly in the still air. There were horses and cattle in the meadows. It was a paradise in these arid mountains.

For a moment, in the heavenly scene which spread before her vision, the girl forgot that she was alone, wet, shivering, hungry; that she was lost. The rain had given a fresh touch to everything, and the place appeared bathed in the sunlight like a gigantic gleaming emerald in a matrix of gray granite.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "how beautiful!"

"I'm glad you like it, ma'am," spoke a voice at her elbow.

As she turned toward the side of the mountain, she saw a rifle protruding over a low wall of rock; it was followed by the tall, well-built and elegant person of a Western cowboy in the conventional attire, loose shirt, flowing handkerchief, leather "chaps," boots, spurs, broad hat, and so on. Around his waist was a belt, from which depended a sheath-



"Glad you like it, ma'am,"
he repeated.—Page 43

knife on one side, on the other a heavy revolver. He carried his rifle in his hand.

"Glad you like it, ma'am," he repeated, taking off his hat, and exposing a head covered with dark curls.

"Like it?" said Josephine, "why, it is lovely! I'm lost, sir. My party is camped on the Powder River. I rode away alone this morning and was overtaken by the storm. How I came here I scarcely know."

"Wall, you better git out these diggin's as quick as you kin, ma'am. Take my advice, an' mosey down that trail ter onct."

"But can't I get something to eat, and some one to show me the way?"

"Ain't nobody goin' to show you out of here. People who gits in here never comes out. As fer eatin', I've got some bread and meat, an' here's some liquor."

He reached behind a rocky wall, and handed her a couple of roughly made sandwiches, and then drew from his pocket a silver-mounted flask of whiskey, which he uncorked and proffered her.

"Thank you," said the girl, taking the sandwiches; "I'm afraid I'm robbing you."

"Never mind that; I kin git more," he answered laconically, again offering her the liquor.

"No, I'd rather have some water, if you please."

"There ain't none up here, but I'll git you some," turning away. "You'd best git off your hoss an' stretch yourself while you eat. You'll have some tall

ridin' to do before you git back, if y'ever do git back."

There was something mysterious about the whole thing, but Josephine Cooper felt sufficiently able to take care of herself in the presence of any ordinary man, and this handsome young fellow appeared entirely harmless, so she felt no uneasiness. She permitted him to assist her to dismount from the horse, which was too tired to move away, and she sat down on the rock and began to eat her sandwiches while her interlocutor went for water. He came back with a tomato-can full of that precious liquid and handed it to her with an apology for the cup, and then stood and watched her eat and drink.

"I don't know what's goin' to happen to you," he said at last.

"Happen to me?" exclaimed the girl. "Why, aren't you going to look after me? Take me down the mountain, and back to the camp. Mr.—but you haven't told me your name."

"Carter, ma'am," answered the young fellow, gazing dubiously at her; "Kid Carter, they calls me up here. What's yourn?"

"Josephine Cooper," responded the girl, extending her hand. "I am here with the bishop and Captain McCauley and Mr. Barnard from Fort Kinney."

"Oh, they're soldiers, ain't they?" said the young man, taking her dainty hand in his great paw. "Wot are they doin' there?"

"They are out for a little fun."

"That means pluggin' some poor devil like me, I suppose," grimly answered Mr. Carter.

"No, no; merely a hunting and fishing expedition," interrupted Miss Cooper. "Why, do you fear them?"

"I ain't afeard of no one," said the man, proudly. "Only——"

"Look here, Kid," interrupted another voice, "what in blazes hev you got there?"

A shocky, villainous-looking ruffian, dressed in rude garments of home-made manufacture, but armed like the cowboy, suddenly appeared on the trail.

"Good Lord, it's a female woman! How did you git her? Say, where did you come from, sis?"

He slouched forward, and peered insolently into her face. She sprang to her feet instantly, shrinking nearer to Kid Carter, who instinctively placed himself between the two.

"Who is this person?" indignantly asked the girl.

"Pusson!" roared the other man, throwing back his head and laughing viciously, "pusson, eh? I'm a gent, I'll hev you understand, as has killed four men to his two."

"A murderer!" cried the girl, and then, suddenly turning to Carter, she asked him, "Is it true? Are you a——?"

"Murderer?" interrupted the second man. "We're all murderers up here or horse-thieves, or else we've done time, an' the law wants us, or——"

"What is this place?" asked the girl, faintly.

"It's called 'Hell Hole,'" answered Kid Carter, biting his lip and blushing, violently.

"Yes, that's what we call it," interrupted the other man, again. "My name's Hollis, Pete Hollis. 'Three-fingered Pete,'" he added, holding up his left hand, "'cause I got this one cut off in a little round-up with a gent, w'ich I blowed the top of his head off to let some light inter his brains, so he wouldn't tackle a man like me. An' this pocket w'ich we calls 'Hell Hole' belongs to us, me an' some gents below. We diskivered it, an' we keeps open house fer everybody that's in trouble, ye know, as is wanted by a sheriff or the military, or anythin' like that. The way you come is the only way in, an' nobody that comes in goes out agin. See that little rock pile there? We've allus got a man there keepin' watch. We kin hold this place against a thousand men. All we've got to do is to draw a bead with a rifle when we hears any one comin', an' blaze away. They can't only come one at a time, an' we allus settles the fust one afore t'other gits around."

"But those houses down there?"

"You don't think we live like Injuns in tepees, do ye? We farm a little down there, jist enough to keep us in grub. Why, we've got a society, family life, down there. Women—I'll interduce you to 'em. Wot are you in here fer?"

"Great heaven!" exclaimed the girl to the cowboy. "Take me away from here!"

"Don't you move, Carter," cried the other man, covering him with his Winchester. "I got the drop

on ye. I'd be justified in blowin' yer brains out, Carter, fer these interestin' perceedin's. But you're a tenderfoot here, an' don't know the rules of the range. Everything wot comes in here has to go to the captain for his inspection. If you claims the girl, you kin do it down there, though I don't reckon the claim'll hold good, seein's I come on the scene. Go on down that trail; you foller him, miss; your horse'll come along, I reckon."

"But if I refuse to go?" asked the girl.

"I'll let daylight through him," roared Hollis, pointing to Carter.

"Don't mind me," said that young man smiling up at her, "I wouldn't mind it. I was a fool to let him git the drop on me. It's all in a day's work."

"Have you killed a man, too?" she asked, looking at him in a daze while he stood silently before her.

"Of course, or he wouldn't be up here," said Hollis. "Now, stop this palaverin' an' mosey."

The descent into the valley was neither long nor difficult. At the foot of the trail there was an open clearing, one side of which, under some beautiful old trees, stood a rude house. Two or three men were lounging on the porch in front of it playing cards. A slatternly woman, who had once been pretty, was standing in the doorway.

"Hello, Pete!" cried one of the men, "what hev you got there?"

"A woman, by jinks!" cried a second. "Hev yer killed yer man, or wot are ye up here fer?"

"Welcome to 'Hell Hole' madam," said another, who seemed of a higher grade than the others.

"Sir," instantly said Josephine with a shudder, "I am a member of a hunting party on the other side of the mountains, and lost my way in the rain and mist. I don't know how I got here. I wish some one to show me the way back to my camp."

"Captain," cried Hollis springing forward, "she hadn't ought to be let go. Let her stay here, I'll take keer of her."

"You will, eh?" said the semi-respectable individual addressed as "captain." "Well, who found her?"

"I did," said Carter, "she came up the trail on my watch an' I rounded her up."

"Didn't look much like roundin' up to me," said Hollis savagely. "W'en I saw 'em she was a-settin' on the ground eatin' his sandwiches an' he was a-talkin' to her as peaceful an' lamblike——"

"She is my captive," said Carter stubbornly. "I found her—I took her; I could hev shot her all right. I'd drawed a bead on her w'en she rounded that curve, but I seen she was a woman. I made her git off her horse. We come here. She's my captive. Ain't you miss?"

He shot one appealing glance at her. The girl was in a frightful situation. What she should do she could not imagine. There was something, however, in Mr. Carter's look that promised hope. If she read him aright he was willing and anxious to help her.

Moistening her lips she answered, staking all on his worthiness:

"Yes, he caught me."

"But," said Hollis, starting forward, his face flushing, "she is mine. I want her an' I'm goin' to have her."

"Get back, you dog!" said the captain whipping out his own gun, and covering Hollis with it, "you don't seem to know how to treat a lady. Don't you lift a finger, or I'll blow your brains out. Madam," he said turning to the girl, "my name is Bell—John Bell. I was once a surgeon in the United States Army. I had—a-er-little difficulty with a man down in Laramie and I—in short—I killed him and had to pull in my freight. That's how I came to be here. Have no fear. You shall be safe."

"Thank you," cried the girl, a gleam of relief appearing in her face, "Thank you."

"She's mine, I tell you," said Carter sullenly, "I got her an' by the laws you made me sign to last week, w'en I fust come here, the disposin' of her belongs to me."

"He's right, captain."

"The Kid's kerrect, old man," cried one of the ruffians.

"Law is law," added another.

It seemed strange to hear these outlawed men pleading the power of the law. The captain looked anxious. Suddenly his face fell upon the form of Hollis.

"What are you skulking here for, you hound!"

he shouted. "Are you not on watch? Get back to the trail; the whole United States army might be pouring through that pass, for all you know! Up there, lively!"

Hollis turned instantly, and started on a run up the road, pursued by the angry shouts of the rest of the gang, who were profoundly incensed at him for his absence, for their safety depended upon their rigid control of that pass.

The place was a city of refuge for all the scoundrels of the Northwest. It had been held inviolate for a dozen years by the prowess of the men who found shelter there. It was impossible to enter the "pocket" except through that dangerous pass. Sheriffs had tried it, mobs of indignant cattle-owners had attempted it, even the United States army had essayed it, but with no success whatever. When a man got in here he was safe from punishment so long as he stayed there; provided, of course, that he were able to get along with the other outlaws and desperadoes who lived there.

"Madam," said Bell, "what the Kid says is right. That's the law of this place. We're all outlaws, but we have learned from that very fact that we must have some law or we can't live. You belong to him. But, hark ye, Kid Carter, if you harm that young woman, by God, look to it! I'll shoot you on sight! Who is with your party, madam?"

"Captain McCauley and the bishop——"

"If you ever get out of here alive, and if you ever see them again," continued the doctor, "give my

compliments to McCauley, and tell him I'm living in Hell—" He paused just long enough before he added the word "Hole" to make his meaning apparent to her.

"Ma'am," said Carter, "the sooner we git out of here, the better."

"What are you going to do with her?" asked Bell.

"Take her back to her camp."

"Wot!" cried one of the men, "you're goin' to leave the 'Hole?'"

"I am."

"Well, it's your own risk," said another; "dog-gone it, I'd not do it fer no woman!"

"Are you comin' back, Kid?"

"If I kin git back," said the young man.

"Bring some coffee, Nell," cried the doctor to the woman in the door—a lady who had made way with her husband. "I'm sorry we have no sugar at present," he added, handing it to Josephine; "we mostly take things black and strong in here. Have you had a bite to eat?"

"All I wanted," answered the girl, drinking her coffee, the stimulating effect of which she thought would be valuable to her.

"Allow me," continued the doctor, as Carter led up the horse, which had been refreshed by a good drink of water, and had been cropping the grass. He lifted her to the saddle with perfect ease and grace. "It's a long time," he said, softly, "since I have met a lady, and I wish to God—but this is part of the punishment."

Carter seized the bridle, turned the horse about, and they went up the trail, leaving the captain and one or two of his associates, who emulated his movement, standing bareheaded behind them. They went along for some distance without saying a word. Carter plodded moodily ahead, and the horse followed steadily after. It was the woman who broke the silence.

"Mr. Carter," she said, softly.

There was no answer.

"Mr. Carter," louder.

Still no answer.

"Mr. Carter!"

"Well, wot is it?" he said, gruffly, at last, not looking at her.

"Is it true?"

"Is what true?"

"What those men said. Are you——?"

"Yes, every one of us."

"It can't be possible! And you are——?"

"You see, ma'am," said the young man, stopping and turning to her, his face flushed, "it was this way. He done me dirt, an' most broke me down in Laramie. Filled me with bad whiskey an' w'en he got me drunk, robbed me of my money at kyards. Then I up an' plugged him full of holes. The sheriff tried to take me an'—I laid him out, too."

"And all this for a sum of money?"

"It didn't belong to me," explained Carter. "It belonged to the Cross Bar Cattle Company. I was fetchin' it from the bank fer the old man to pay the

hands with—a whole lot of it, too. I wish to God I hadn't shot him. Savin' a drunk now an' then, an' a gamble w'en I had the money, I've lived clean an' straight as punchers go. But that was onct too often. I didn't mean to shoot the sheriff, noway."

"Then what happened?" asked the girl.

There was something so boyish and frank about the young man, and she had gone through so much that day, she had seen him against such a background of utter blackguardism and crime in the person of the others, that she scarcely realized the enormity of his offense.

"Then, I broke away for this place. It's knowed all over the West. If you onct git in here you're safe so long as you stay here. It's well named, ain't it?—to turn a paradise into Hell Hole by interducin' men like them."

"Do you have to stay here all your life?"

"I ain't a-goin' to stay here ten minutes."

"How is that?"

"I'm goin' to take you back to the camp."

"Couldn't I find my way back alone?"

"Not in a thousand years."

"And after that?"

"I'll come back here."

"Oh, don't," cried the girl.

"Where else kin I go? If I left here I'd git ketched an' jugged, an' tried, an' as the evidence is plain, I'd swing fer it. I'm young yit. I ain't quite sick of this place. They do git tired of it sometimes an' break out no matter wot happens, but I kin stand

it a little longer. Gosh! it'll be horrible when you're gone—it sure will. Old Doc Bell said it had been years—I heard him—since he had spoken to a lady. I ain't never spoke to one since I left my mother, before this mornin'; leastaways, no one like you. Don't be skeered," he added, as he saw a strange look sweep over her face, "I won't hurt you."

"I'm not in the least alarmed, Mr. Carter; I trust you implicitly."

"Say, don't call me 'Mr. Carter;' it seems strange like, an' as if you was a judge or a court, or some-thin'. Everybody calls me 'Kid.'"

"Very well, then. I'm not a bit afraid of you, Kid. I know you will take me back to the camp. You were ready to protect me a moment since."

"I'd like to see any one lay a finger on you; it would a' been the last of him," said the man in the most matter-of-fact way.

"Thank you," said the girl.

"Say, Miss, put it there," he said, innocently extending his hand.

Without a moment's hesitation she put her own hand in his. He shook it vigorously a second time. By this time they had come to the curve of the mountains where the pass narrowed and where the watchman was stationed. Hollis stood there, gun in hand, looking as ugly as might be expected from one of his calibre.

"I've got to leave you to go alone a bit," whispered

Carter, "I've got to take keer of that man. Ride around that bend. I'll cover you an' follow you."

The girl obediently urged her horse forward, although all her terror came back to her as the animal slowly edged its way around the narrow trail over the yawning abyss. Behind her, with his back toward her and his face toward Hollis, his gun in his hand, stumbled Kid Carter, and she heard him say as she turned the corner:

"Don't make no move with that gun of yourn, Hollis, or I'll let daylight through you, an' they'll need another man to watch this pass."

"Are you goin' down with that woman?" asked Hollis.

"I am; wot's that to you?"

"Well, you're a fool!" snarled the other man. "I don't need to waste my shot on you. You'll be dancin' on nothin' in Laramie in a few days."

"That's my business."

"Yours and the sheriff's," laughed the other.

"An' I warns you to stay right here where you are, fer the present," said Carter, paying no attention to this jeering remark. "If you pokes your nose around that bend of rock, I'll make a target of it. An' I'll aim to kill, too."

Another moment and he slipped around the cliff and stood by her side. She had caught only a portion of the conversation, but it had been enough for her.

"There is no danger to you, is there?"

"No," answered the man, lying with the grace and

ease of a gentleman. "They don't know me down there; that is, they don't know wot I've done or that I've put fer this country, an' if you don't tell 'em, I kin git back all right."

"If I don't tell? Is that kind? I trusted you; can't you trust me?"

"I kin," answered Carter, instantly. "But it's gittin' late, an' we've got to hurry up. We won't git to that camp till long after dark, as it is. I wisht I had a pony."

He seized the bridle, and pushed rapidly down the trail.

"Why don't you reform, and try to make something out of yourself?" asked the girl, when they had crossed the dangerous part of the pass, and conversation was more easy.

"Reform? Where'd I go to reform? Do you think anybody could reform in that hole?"

"Can't you get away somewhere—where people do not know you?"

It never occurred to the girl that she was actually making herself accessory after the fact to a murder, or, at any rate, to the murderer—compounding a felony, as it were!

"I ain't got no money noway to help me along," continued the cow-boy. "The whole country south between the railroad an' here is on the lookout fer me."

The girl put her hand into the bosom of her dress, and pulled out a small purse. Before she could say a word, or even extend her hand, he stopped her.

"Put that up! I ain't that low."

"I know you're not, but——"

"How much hev you there?" he asked, comprehending the small capacity of the dainty affair in a glance.

"Four or five dollars, but I can get plenty more."

"That wouldn't carry me a hundred miles, an' if you had a million I wouldn't take it. I ain't that mean. No use of your talkin', Miss; I drawed these cards, an' I've got to play this hand out, wotever it is."

There was something so hopeless about the situation in which her sympathies were so profoundly enlisted, that the girl was filled with dismay. There did not seem to be any subject upon which they could converse, and they journeyed forward thereafter in silence, broken only by his warnings and her infrequent questions. Carter seemed to know the lay of the land fairly well.

"I have hunted in it, hunted them fellers," he said, in answer to a question. "In '92 I was one of a posse that tried to clean out that pocket back there—that infernal gang; I beg your pardon, ma'am—so I knows this country pretty well. They keep another lookout above that place where I was keepin' watch, an' we've knowed all about your party for days. Some of the gang was fer goin' down an' raidin' the camp, but didn't dare; there was too many men in the party."

The girl shuddered at the possibility the man's simple speech conjured up in her mind. They had

been so entirely peaceful in the camp, never dreaming of danger of any kind.

The two had progressed several miles, when, suddenly coming around a gigantic butte, which Josephine thought she recognized, and which was indeed the one that had afforded her shelter from the cyclone, they had a fair view of the whole eastern slope of the mountains. Away off in the distance lay the white tents of the camp.

It was now late in the afternoon and the girl could not possibly reach it before dark; but she instantly turned to Carter, who stood by her side, surveying the prospect.

"There is the camp," she said.

"I sees it."

"I can make my way there now, I think, without your assistance."

"It'll be dark long before you git there," returned the man, "I'm goin' with you."

She endeavored to dissuade him, but could not move him. They went forward more rapidly, after that; as rapidly, indeed, as the man could keep pace with the horse, and it was not until late in the evening that they found themselves on a bit of level ground; perhaps half a mile of prairie, with the trees at the other end, which alone shut out a view of the camp. Off to one side, they could hear the rush of the river. Scarcely had they progressed a quarter of the way down the open, when a little party of horsemen entered just behind them. As soon as these

caught sight of Josephine and her companion they shouted loudly to attract their attention.

"Oh!" cried the girl turning her horse, "there's the bishop!" as she recognized a little stout man at the head of the party. "And there's Captain McCauley and—and Mr. Barnard."

"Who are the others?" asked Carter, whipping out his gun. He stood poised on his foot as if to run. "Those are your friends; but that other man an' them with him; I reckon they're lookin' fer me."

"What do you mean?"

"That's the sheriff of Johnson county an' that's his posse. They've been huntin' me an' your friends hev pressed them inter service to hunt you. It's all up with me, but I'm glad you're safe."

"But you will be taken!" cried the girl; "they will——"

"No matter."

"Wait!"

Disengaging her foot from the stirrups she sprang to the ground instantly.

"Take my horse!" she gasped. "Quick! You saved me, I'll save you."

The man hesitated.

"Go!" she urged.

It was the work of a second for him to unbuckle the saddle and throw it aside. Gathering the reins in his hand he leaped to the back of the big cavalry horse.

"Good-bye," cried the girl lifting her hand.

They were very near now, but he pulled off his sombrero, bent low over the saddle, seized her hand and pressed a long kiss upon it.

"If I'd 'a' met you afore," he cried, "I might hev been a different man."

The party was close at hand. Still holding his cocked pistol, Carter put the spur into the horse. He started off on a gallop instantly toward the other end of the glade.

"Josephine!" cried the bishop, as they approached, "are you safe? We have been searching for you all day."

"Entirely so," answered the girl, "thanks to that man," pointing to the rapidly disappearing figure.

"Who is he?" asked Barnard jealously as he dismounted and took her hand. "I've been wild with——"

"By gosh, I know him!" exclaimed the sheriff. "That's my man. That's Kid Carter! him we've come to ketch, boys. After him!"

He lifted his Winchester as he spoke, and levelled it at the fleeing man. The girl rushed toward the sheriff frantically waving her hands and screaming. The startled horse jumped aside, the gun went off and the bullet sped harmlessly down the valley. But, by this time, other rifles were cracking; she could not attend to them all, and one shot hit the old troop horse. He jumped into the air and fell. Carter, revolver in hand, was off him in a minute, making for the woods near the river bank amid a fusilade of bullets. Josephine Carter, who had stood appalled at

first, now ran into the open between the posse and the fugitive, her arms extended as if to protect him. She might as well have tried to check a whirlwind, for they brushed her aside without a second's hesitation, and galloped forward, firing as they ran. The cruel joy of a man hunt was with them. There were good shots in that posse. Carter suddenly staggered and fell just as they reached him. He lay on the ground, his revolver still clenched in his hand.

"Be careful, boys," said the sheriff, riding up; "he's got his gun with him yet."

"You needn't be afraid," gasped out the Kid, dropping the weapon, "I won't shoot. I don't want no more blood on my hands. Where's the lady?"

"Here," answered Josephine, forcing her way through the men; "are you much hurt?"

"I'm done for, this time. Say, I'm glad I don't hev to go back to that place."

"What does he mean?" asked the sheriff.

"That pocket in the mountains, you know," said the girl, stooping down and slipping her arm under the dying man's head; "I ventured in there in the storm——"

"Good gosh! have you been in Hell Hole," said the sheriff, "and got out alive?"

"Yes, thanks to him. He claimed me, and brought me here at the risk of his life."

"Kid," said the sheriff, stooping down and taking the man's hand, "that was white of you. If I'd known that, I'll be blamed if I'd 'a' shot at you! Eh, boys?"

"It's just as well," said the Kid, faintly. "Thank you, ma'am; I'm glad I done it. Is that the bishop you was talkin' about? I have been a bad boy, bishop. But seein's I'm knocked out this time, don't you think I'll git a show when I've gone over the range?"

"You gave your life for another, for this girl, my boy," said the old man, kneeling down by him. "It was a sacrifice, an atonement. 'Greater love,' said Jesus, 'hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.'"

"An' I didn't shoot the posse when I might hev. I wanted as clean a hand as I could carry now. I'm sorry to have all this unpleasant business a-dooin' afore you miss; I sure am. It's growing dark mighty sudden, ain't it? It must be gittin' late. I'm not afraid to die if you think I hev a chance."

"Yes, yes," cried the girl, "I'm sure of it."

"I've been in hell onct to-day," he gasped out, "an' in heaven, too." He smiled up at her. "Would you lemme kiss your hand ag'in afore——?"

The girl glanced interrogatively at Barnard. There was no need of explanation between these two at this time. She knew that he loved her and he knew that she loved him, and the petty quarrel was composed in the shadow of the death angel's wing. Then she bent her head, lifted Carter's head a little higher and kissed him on the lips. The smile broadened—it was almost a laugh—then stopped suddenly. It was as if a hand had been passed over his face and smoothed it out.

She laid his head back on the sod, and rose to her feet. The bishop still knelt, praying in the twilight; the others stood around, their hats in their hands.

But poor Kid Carter had gone over the range.

Third Record

HER BIRTHDAY*

Romance had never ceased to play a part—and a large one—in the career of Edith Gordon. The one regret of her life was that John Gordon, her husband, had become so intensely practical. It had been “Jack” in those days when the blood burned and the heart was prodigal with vows and protestations; but that time was long past, and the erstwhile dashing “Jack” had developed into the stout, somewhat prosaic, entirely unromantic “John,” a man eminently unsuited to play Romeo to Edith’s Juliet.

Edith herself had not stood still—outwardly—during the advancing years, yet she had not lost a great deal. While, of course, the freshness of youth no longer shone in her face, the classic features, about which “Jack” had been wont to rave, but which “John” now viewed with such complacency, had been left unravaged by the course of time. The gloss and sheen were gone from the abundant chestnut hair that waved above her sweet low brow, but the soft light of the somewhat premature gray crown of advancing years provided a substitute scarcely less charming.

Her figure, too, was not quite what it had been.

* By courtesy of “The Delineator.”

The fulness of a ripe—Edith thought sometimes with dismay that it was a ripening—development of womanhood had overwhelmed the slender curves of girlhood; but the result was still satisfactory, especially when aided by those mysterious devices by which feminine humanity successfully conceals the overloading tendency of ageing flesh. No greater insult could be offered Edith Gordon than to say that she was getting “fat.” No one in the house said it either, although ill-natured people outside sometimes did not refrain from such “slander and evil speaking;” but Edith’s heart was as young, as fresh, as verdant as ever; her mind was as imaginative, as subtly apprehensive of the mysterious, the beautiful, the heroic, as it had been when she was a girl.

In that sort of development she had stood still. It was a never-ending source of grief to her that John—she hated that name, and never called him that except in public; in private it was often “Jack, darl,” or something else equally affectionate—that John was so changed, so unresponsive, so unromantic. Why, he had actually declared that he would rather be comfortable in his clothes than look well in them any day of the year. That he didn’t really care enough about growing stout to diet himself! That nothing on earth would induce him to “bant,” and as for exercise, he abhorred it! He was never so happy as in a shabby old dressing gown and a disreputable pair of slippers, by his own fireside, with Edith, more beautiful than ever he averred—with

truth in his heart—opposite him, and the children of this singular pair, six in number, clustered around them.

But after all, John was a good sort of a man. He was the best of husbands and absurdly devoted to Edith in his own quiet way. He really never left her if he could help it. When he went away from the city on business he always took her with him. He delighted to see her beautifully dressed, and while he sometimes mocked, he inwardly approved of all her efforts to maintain and retain the charms which had won him to her affections so many years before. But he was not demonstrative. No contingencies that could arise would prevent him from eating his dinner. Edith was furiously jealous at times of the children, who moiled and toiled about him and over him, and to whom he frequently addressed those pet names and endearing terms which she had once thought were her own peculiar property.

But she never had the slightest chance to be jealous of anyone else. She sometimes longed for him to give her an opportunity to rise out of the placid humdrum consciousness of his steady affection; and in more daring flights of imagination she frequently wished that in some way, without doing anything wrong or compromising herself in any way, she could make John ragingly jealous; see him lose a meal or two and get thin.

But nothing happened. She often thought, with a sigh, that all the romance of her life was past; there was nothing before her but to live on in this

contented, peaceful, uneventful way until the end. If Edith had enjoyed a wider experience of life—and husbands—she would have known that she was blessed almost above women.

John honestly tried, at times, to rise to the measure of her requirements. For instance, he never consciously forgot an anniversary. There were more anniversaries in Edith's calendar, too, than Saints' Days in the Church year. Long ago John had learned manfully to face the consequences of those frightful lapses of memory which confronted him in the presence of Edith with this question trembling upon her lips:

“John Gordon, do you know what day this is?”

When Edith asked that question she was not seeking information as to the day of the week or the month. She wanted John to remember that it was on such a day as this that he had first met her at so-and-so's house. She wanted John to remember every detail of that meeting, which her own marvelous imaginative faculties could reproduce with absolute accuracy. Everything that ever happened, that was connected with their courtship and early life, was an anniversary, and John really remembered them remarkably well. He was a very busy man. He had a great many cares. The needs of his growing family were sufficient to require his undivided attention. Once in a while, he forgot, but not often.

During a crisis in his business, which had filled him with apprehension, on a certain morning Edith

came down to breakfast arrayed with extraordinary bravery. She wore a new shirt-waist of the color and style which John affected. In the centre of the table was a great bunch of chrysanthemums, flowers associated with their wedding day, which had happened to fall a few days after Edith's twenty-second birthday. She had made an heroic resolution before she descended to the dining-room that she would not call John's attention to the fact that that day was her birthday—in words, that is; but she had been unable to restrain herself from indicating in some way the festive character of the day. Not that it was particularly festive for Edith, either, for no woman approaches her fortieth birthday with feelings of equanimity, but that would not matter to John, who was accustomed to say that the older he got the happier he was; and he, at least, ought to rise to the occasion.

And John had risen to the occasion, too. The birthday was one of the things he had not forgotten. He had previously provided her liberally, in accordance with his means, with the jewels which looked so pretty upon her beautiful hands; and on this occasion he had decided to add to her already large collection, what she had long coveted, a pearl. A fine specimen which he had purchased the night before, at that very moment lay in his pocket. But John gave no outward sign. The Stock Market was in a feverish condition, and he buried himself in the paper the moment he sat down. John and Edith breakfasted alone with William. The other children

had their breakfast earlier and had gone to school when these two came down. William was the youngest. He was "goin' on four," as he proudly said, which meant that he had just passed his third birthday. He was an observant young man. Nothing out of the common escaped his youthful eye.

"Mamma," he asked at last, "why are you all dressed up?"

His father, who was turning the paper at that moment, fortunately caught this remark and looked over at his wife.

"Well, Edith, I must say that you look very well, indeed, this morning, my dear. What's the occasion?"

Edith blushed violently and her heart throbbed in spite of herself at the question. She temporized, however. The possibilities of the situation were so great that she wanted to enjoy them a little longer. Instead of the usual retort,

"Why, John Gordon, don't you know what day it is?" she replied lamely enough. "Why—er—nothing particular."

"And the flowers, too," said John, "they're gorgeous. They always remind me of our wedding day," he added swiftly, knowing that this was an exceedingly safe remark to make; and then—will it be believed?—the odious man calmly went back to his paper and coffee.

Edith stopped eating at once and stared at him in silence. Could it be possible? He had forgotten

many things, but never her birthday! William came to the rescue.

“Why don’t you eat your bekfast, mamma?” he remarked.

Again this caught the attention of John.

“What’s the matter, Edith?” he said. “Aren’t you well?”

“Who, I? Perfectly well,” returned Edith with rising indignation, immediately beginning to attack her waffle furiously, although every mouthful choked her.

John had finished his breakfast. He excused himself, rose from the table, caught William’s chubby face in his two hands, and after carefully wiping the fringe of molasses from around his mouth, pressed a long, exuberant kiss upon the baby face; then he stepped over to Edith, laid his hand upon her shoulder, turned her cheek up to him, kissed her softly, in what, it must be admitted, was rather a matter-of-fact manner, and went out.

Edith heard the door close behind him. It was too much. She rose from the table, unheeding the baby’s protests—he objected very much to being left alone—and ran upstairs to her room. She shut the door, threw herself face downward on the bed, and sobbed out her grief and disappointment in an agony of tears.

William, though he did not like solitude, disliked emptiness the more. He stayed at the table until, with the assistance of the maid, he had disposed of a wonderful quantity of cocoa and waffles, there being

no mamma present to interdict his consumption; then he clambered up the stairs, opened the door of his mother's room and entered.

"What's the matter, mamma?" he said, "why are you cryin'?"

"Oh, William, my precious baby, mamma's only comfort," wailed Edith, stretching out her arms toward the chubby boy, "come here to me, my little son. Mamma is so miserable. It's her birthday, and—and—papa didn't remember. Mamma is forty years old to-day—that's bad enough. She's so lonesome, so unhappy! No one even wished her 'many happy returns.'"

"I'll do it, mamma," said William, getting up on the bed and nestling down by her. "Won't you have a birthday cake wiv cannels on it like I did?"

"No, nothing, nothing! Nobody cares for mamma's birthday. She's an old woman now! So lonesome, her heart's broken!"

"Won't papa give you somethin'?"

"He's forgotten all about it, darling. He doesn't care for mamma any more."

Edith was so absorbed in her grief, and William was so absorbed in Edith, that they did not hear the hall door open. They did not mark John's rather heavy tread upon the stairs, consequently they were both greatly surprised when the door opened and he stood before them, an expression of amazement on his face at the sight of the two figures, for the contagion of his mother's misery had been too much for the susceptible infant, and while she was sob-

bing softly he was roaring with all the vociferousness of childhood.

“Why, Edith! William!” cried John in astonishment, “what’s the matter?”

At the sound of his voice Edith sat up, a flash of hope pervading her being. He had remembered, then, and had come back! All would be well. But his first words undeceived her.

“I left those vouchers I was examining last night,” continued John, “and came back for them. ‘I find you in tears. My dear girl, what is the matter?’”

John was unconsciously adroit. Edith loved to be called his “dear girl” and John knew it. This time, however, the words did not mollify her. Since he did not know, she resolved he never should. She determined that hereafter her birthday should pass by unnoticed. She felt the luxury of martyrdom stealing over her, which was some compensation for her misery. She dried her tears as best she could and looked disdainfully and coldly at him.

“Nothing, nothing at all,” she said.

“Dere is, too,” said William, sturdily.

“William!” said Edith sharply, “I forbid you to speak. Don’t say a word!”

Generally John did not interfere between Edith and the children. This time he broke that wise rule. He drew a nickel from his pocket.

“Bill,” he said, holding up the coin, “come here.”

In a second that infant was in his arms, his face shining through his tears.

"What's the matter with mamma, son?" asked John.

"Willie, dear," cried his mother imploringly, but the allurements of the nickel was too great even for his filial affection.

"Papa, don't you know what day it is?" asked the smiling William.

"Great Heavens!" thought John in consternation, "have the children begun to ask that infernal question, too?"

He racked his brain for a possible neglected anniversary.

"Well, what day is it?" he asked finally.

"Why, it's mamma's birthday," said William triumphantly.

John turned open-mouthed to Edith. She had risen and was confronting him like an angry goddess. The flash of indignation upon her cheek, the tear that sparkled in her eye—and Edith was one of the few women who look pretty in tears—made her fairly adorable. He thought she had never appeared more charming, even when she was only sixteen. For an instant his admiration shone in his glance, and the unerring Edith was quick to detect it. There was an opportunity for him to get into her good graces once more. Alas! Nemesis must have been guiding him, for what did John do? His admiration faded into an expression of amusement. He snickered, he chuckled, he laughed. He sank down in the nearest chair and roared. Edith had never been so furiously angry before. This was adding



"Well, what day is it?"—Page 74

insult to injury. So soon as she could make herself heard, she began,

“For my part, John Gordon, I see nothing about which to laugh. You have forgotten my birthday, a thing you have never done before since we have been married. I dressed myself to please you. I put those chrysanthemums on the table because they reminded you always of our wedding day and my birthday. I had the breakfast you liked, too—and—and you never noticed anything! If it hadn’t been for the baby you wouldn’t have known whether I was dressed or not. I even forgot my prejudice and ordered that horrid vulgar liver and bacon—a combination I detest—for you especially. I don’t believe you even knew what you were eating! And then, when you came back, I thought you had remembered, and had come to wish me many happy returns and—and——”

“But, my dear Edith——”

“Don’t say a word! I never was so unhappy in my life! It is quite evident that you do not care for me now that I am getting old. All you think of is comfort, comfort and your children. And I’m forty and married to a man who has ceased to love me at all. It’s bad enough to be forty without being so neglected and so lonesome!”

Here Edith put her head down in her hands and began to cry. John was sober enough now, although the remains of his amusement were plainly visible. It was William who broke in.

"Papa, you're bad to my mamma, I don't love you any more."

"William," said John gravely, "ask mamma the date of her birthday."

"Thoughtless, cruel, forgetful man," sobbed Edith, "he can't even remember the date. It's November 5th, if you will have it."

"I thought so," said John, "and Edith, my dearest wife, do you realize that to-day is the third of November, and your birthday isn't until day after to-morrow."

"John Gordon, you are deceiving me. It's one of your ways of getting out——"

"Look at the calendar, my dear," said John. "You see?"

Poor Edith! She was certainly two days ahead. She stood looking at John in hopeless dismay. John was making a herculean effort to restrain his mirth. He tried valiantly, but it was impossible. Edith didn't know whether to continue weeping or join in his laughter; it was all so fearfully unromantic, this whole proceeding. William was also waiting to see which way the wind was blowing. Finally Edith caught the infection of her husband's humor and joined in his glee. William's high-pitched staccato trill made an appropriate obligato for the merry conjugal duet.

"Well, now the thing has come out," said John in his matter-of-fact way, feeling in his waistcoat pocket, "since you have arranged this day for your

birthday, I might as well give you the present I was keeping for you," handing her a little packet.

With eager fingers, she tore it open, disclosing the radiant pearl. There was a little slip of paper enclosed in the circlet of the ring.

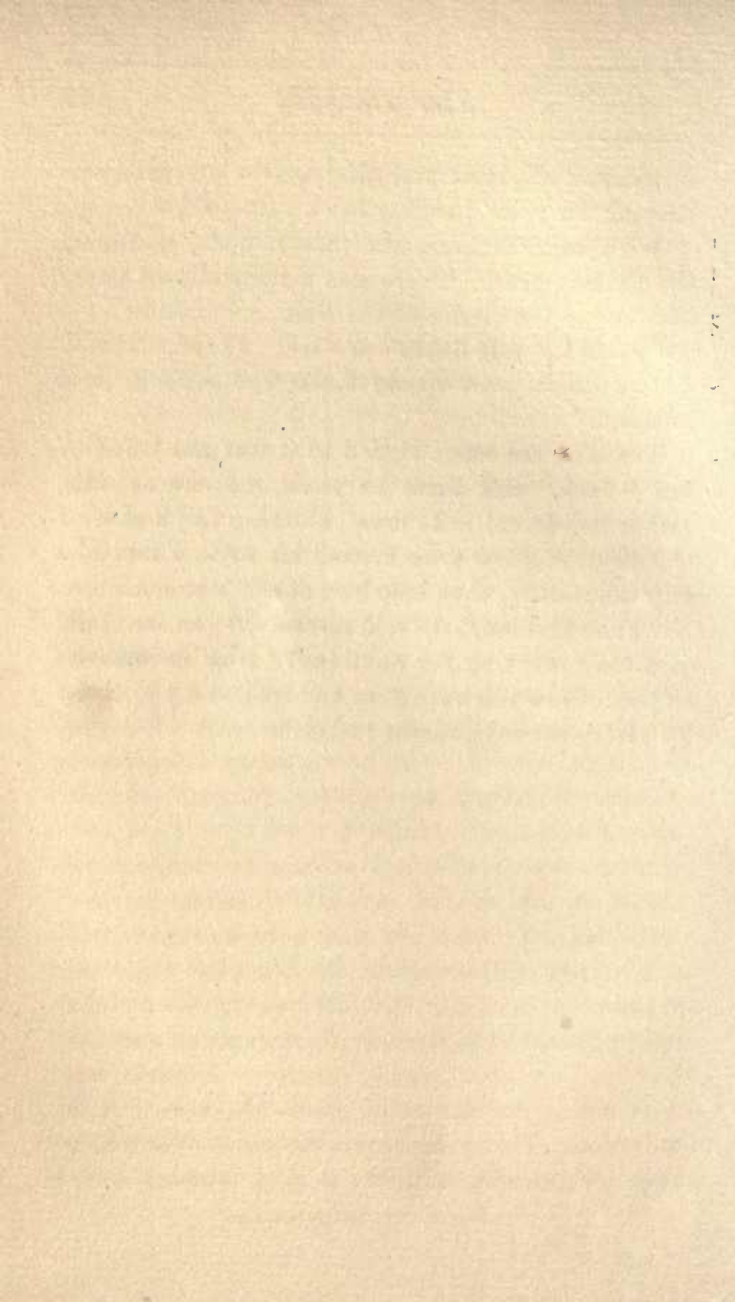
"Read it," said John.

"To Edith, pearl among wives, from her lover and husband."

Yes, and the name signed to it was not "John," but "Jack," and there he stood, fat, unromantic, rather indifferent as to dress, blushing like a girl.

Edith flung her arms around his neck, kissed him enthusiastically, then held him at arm's length.

"John Gordon," she said severely, "you are really just too provoking for anything! How unromantic of you. Now you have gone and spoiled my birthday by giving me my present to-day!"



Fourth Record

“TO HER WHO LOVED HIM BEST OF ALL”*

When “Evidenced by Service” was published it met with an instant and overwhelming success. His friends—and in truth most readers were that, for he was a popular author and had written much—finished its perusal with three states of emotion striving for the mastery—surprise, admiration, and regret. His other books, while they had all been honest, wholesome, pleasing novels, had not led them to expect anything at once so deep, so brilliant, so subtle as this. In each human being, it has been said, there is at least one real book, one real romance. This was his.

The conception of the novel was so startling and original, it was worked out on such strong and unusual lines, the characters were so finely drawn, and the affection of the woman who filled the centre of the story was evidenced in so strange and powerful a way, by an act of unprecedented service to, and sacrifice for, her lover that his warmest admirers even, to say nothing of the public generally, were lost in admiration. The critics, even the great ones whose words have weight, praised the book without a dis-

* By Courtesy of “The Century Magazine.”

senting voice; the presses put forth edition after edition, and the book stores could hardly keep pace with the eager buyers. It was the literary sensation not only of the day, and of the season, but of the year.

The regret of it all was that he was no longer alive to enjoy his belated but unequivocal triumph. He had been an old-fashioned author in many respects, never making use of a secretary or a typewriter for instance, but writing his books laboriously out in longhand. They found him dead one morning before his desk, his head bowed upon his left arm, and that arm upon the manuscript of this last story. The pen was still clasped in his hand. He was indifferent now to praise or blame, success or failure. He had been a hard, persistent worker with his busy pen all his life, and it was a great pity that success came so late—too late.

The last words that he had written had been traced upon the top sheet of paper, blank save for this significant line of dedication:

“TO HER WHO LOVES ME BEST OF ALL.”

There was no explanation vouchsafed as to who was in his mind when he wrote, not the faintest clue anywhere by which the identity of that unknown woman could be discovered. There was some little speculation about it among the critics for a time, some natural curiosity in the public mind at first; but the matter soon ceased to interest in the larger appeal to discussion made by the wonderful book itself, and the question dropped from the view of every-

one except five women. To them it became of vital moment indeed, for each one of the five loved him, and the question, “ Is it I ? ” was at once of serious import so soon as it was formulated by five undecided jealous hearts.

It so happened that not one of them had seen the dedication until the book had been published, for the manuscript had been sent by his literary executors to the publisher without inspection or revision by any member of his family or by any of the others. In one way or another the book came into the hands of each one of them about the same time, and the five women faced the problem without reading the book—that was a secondary matter—and strove to solve it at the same instant from the dedication alone.

The first to consider it was an old, bowed, white-haired woman of threescore and ten years—a woman bereft of her only son, who sat alone waiting the end. She wondered, at first dully and then with awakening apprehension, if she had been in his thoughts as he had traced the words. What love is there that humanity may feel that equals a mother’s love? She had borne him; in her bosom he had lain; she had carried him in her arms as a child; her knee had been his altar in infancy. Over him, around him, about him, her fostering care had ever been thrown. She had trained him, developed him. It was largely due to her labor and love that he was what he was.

There had been other children born to her. One

by one they had gone. He only had been left alive. To him only had she turned at last. Did he mean her? Had this great work that crowned his life been dedicated to her? Surely none had loved him as she. By right, then, she could claim it from all the world—from wife, from child, from friend, she thought with the quiet but exceeding bitter jealousy of the old.

“Evidenced by Service.” She read the title over again. She had scarcely noted it before. What did that mean? Was it love that was evidenced? How stood she there? Had she loved him by that test? Had she served him in the end as in the beginning? Had her devotion wavered or faltered? Was there a taint of self in it? Her conscience smote her at the thoughts. He had been worried, harassed, straitened in many ways in these latter years. She had seen it, she had known it. Had she aggravated his trouble? Had she done what she could for him, had she given or demanded? There had been quarrels, causeless, foolish, jealous quarrels with his wife, dissensions between them on account of him. Had it been her fault? Had she shown the spirit of love, of comity, of self-sacrifice? Had she thought of him or herself first? Had she striven to make him happy? Was it she, after all? His look reproached her because there was only love and consideration for her in it—no reproof for his mother. She sat staring aimlessly before her in the silence, so old, so lonely, the book neglected in her lap. Was it she? O God, was it she?

What of another woman? He had been fond of quoting to his wife, she now remembered, that little word of Scripture, “ A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country.” And to-day that broken-hearted wife sat alone before his desk in the study on the top floor of their home, which she had so infrequently visited when he lived and worked there, but which now seemed the only room in that lonely house in which she could bear to abide, for there everything spoke to her of him. She lifted the book to her lips and confidently appropriated to herself the dedication. He had thought of her then. Thank God! Yes. In those closing hours, in that last night before he went to sleep to awake elsewhere, he had thought of her, of her. She kissed the page with a passionate intensity. No one had loved him as she. He must have known it.

But stop. Doubt came into her heart also. Did he, had he known it? Had she known it herself until after? Ah, no. She must be honest with herself now, and if she had not, how could he have known? There had been quarrels, differences, dissensions, petty bickerings, ill tempers—her fault, her fault. She had not entered into his work, had not understood him, had not sympathized with him as she might. She had been captious, indifferent, exacting. Had she? Had he been first in her thoughts before all the rest? He was so tired, not himself, and she had not comprehended. He had died alone, over his book, pen in hand, like the knight in his harness.

What had he said last to her? Or she to him? When had she kissed him last in life?

He had worked so hard, so faithfully, for her and her children. Had she worked for him? Had she kept from him all trouble, all annoyance, that she might have done? Or had she loaded these things upon his already burdened shoulders? Had she been a helpmate to him? "Wilt thou obey him, and serve him, love, honor and keep him?" Service? Had she evidenced aught by that supreme test? There was his mother—there were so many things. They crowded swiftly upon her.

Had she ever known him before? Ah, now she knew him. None knew him as she. He had been so kind to her, so gentle with her, so indulgent to her. How had she repaid him? She remembered again so many things he had said and done—things full of meaning to her now, different meaning, better meaning. The illumination of a great sorrow was upon her, the enlightenment of a great loss was poured into her soul. She knew him at last. She saw him as he was. She loved him now as none other could. She understood him as never before, and it was too late, too late! Could he have meant her when he wrote those last words? Could he have fathomed her heart in spite of herself? Or was there some other one? Who could it be?

She laid the book down on the desk, where his head had lain when he died, rested her head on her hands, and stared at it in a cold agony of jealous indecision, as one fascinated. Like the mother, she had

no tears. She was praying, praying in vain for one word of assurance.

In the privacy of her chamber sat his daughter. She was a girl of eighteen, with all the undimmed enthusiasm of her years. She had been proud of her father, passionately attached to him. Fond of her mother, yes, but the two stood on such different planes that there was no comparison. She took the book in her hand and bedewed the page with her tears—the easy tears of youth. She had been such a comfort to him in many ways, he had said sometimes. She had understood him less, but had worshipped him more. Had he meant her?

There was a childish jealousy in the query in her heart, jealousy of her mother, of her grandmother, of everybody. What was the test he himself had laid down? The highest test of love, service? Had she served him? Had she helped him as she might have done? Had she been a daughter indeed? Alas! there arose before her moments of folly, of petulance, of scenes that had tried him almost beyond endurance. If she only had not done it! If she only had always been what he fain would have made her, and what she could so easily have been! It was not she, fond, foolish little child. Would God it might have been!

Away out West a woman who had lived unmarried all these years for love of him pressed the book to her heart, which cried out, in jealous pain she could not stifle, that he must have meant her, there could

be no other. They had been boy and girl lovers together and were to have been married. She was young and foolish; they quarreled. It was her fault. He went away and married some one else. She had never seen him since then, and she had repented only once—that was all her life. When too late she discovered that she had loved him with a passion like that Francesca bore Paolo, or Petrarch held for Laura.

And he had loved her. If things had been different and they had been together, how her love would have uplifted him, ennobled him! She knew that she would have made him a better wife than any other; that she would have understood him, sympathized with him, helped him, aided him, as none other could. He must have felt it. The compulsion of her passion must have been upon him. He must have known it. Her heart must have spoken to him in some ethereal hour. Sometimes the dying see visions. Had he seen her at last and believed? And was she wrought within the fabric of his final dream?

Yet, she, too, had failed him. She had robbed him of the treasure of her affection. When she might have been all to him she had elected to be nothing. Could that be explained or brushed aside? Service? She had given him none at all. She had loved him as none other. But had he understood? No, the book was not for her; she could not claim it by desert, however much her desire. He would never know it. He could never understand. Her heart might break with impotent passion, it could make no difference now.

Out where they laid him on the slope of the hill fronting the east, a woman held the book in her trembling hand, and looked down at the green mound stretching monotonously from her feet. There were withered flowers upon it, blossoms as evanescent as remembrance. She stood there unheeding the soft drip of the rain drenching the garments enshrouding her figure, a wretched, unfortunate woman, fallen as low as humanity could fall and yet be human.

Late one night years ago he had been walking along the deserted river front of the great city in search of local color for one of his novels, and he had pulled from the water at the risk of his life this wretched creature, sick with the hideous horror of her situation, and striving to end it all with one plunge into the icy flood. Nor had his services ceased there. He had provided for her, found a place of rest for her, helped her, in his strong and quiet way, to make something out of herself, put her in the way of becoming a good woman once more.

No one had ever spoken to her as he. She had never met one like him. Her heart had gone out to him. She had loved him with her whole soul. She had worshipped the ground he had walked upon. If he had known he might have meant her. If he had looked he might have recognized her devotion. The book might have been for her; she would appropriate it to herself anyway; by right of the truth it was hers for she had loved him best of all.

Yet the love she bore him had not served to save

her. The last state of the woman was worse than the first. She loved him, yet she had been weak. She had tried—O God how she had tried!—and if she had failed it had not been his fault. Had he known of her failure it would have grieved him to the very heart, but she had gone away and left no word.

“He should have been mine! He was mine, if love gives a claim!” she cried, stretching out her hands to the cold, gray clouds bending low above her head. “If I could have been his it might have been different. He did not know, but the book was for me. There is no other can feel as I. He was life to me, salvation to me!”

Stop! There had not been life enough in her love for him to draw her away from the body of death to which she was bound. Her love had not been strong enough to save her from shame. Whoever else there might be, whoever else might claim the words, she was the unworthiest of them all. The book was not for her. She hesitated even to read it, although to buy it had taken her last penny. She knelt down on the wet grass, her face in her hands, but could form no petition. She could not even think of God, for she thought of him.

Yet in the book, all unconsciously it may be, he had solved the problem, and presently one woman of the five read and understood, a peace in her heart that to the others was denied.



"He was mine, if love gives
a claim!" she cried.—Page 88

Fifth Record

THE BABY'S ADVENTURES AND MINE

I

THE FIRST ADVENTURE *

The family were enjoying an attack of tonsillitis. I think there were one hundred and fifty cases distributed throughout the hotel in which we were spending the summer, but we got more than our share of the disease, for the baby's mother, his two sisters, his big brother, and, most unfortunate of all, even his nurse, had it. And they all had it practically at the same time, too.

He and I escaped; but I had *him*, and I don't know which was the more trying. At present I think the baby was—but then, I have never had the tonsillitis. I am his father. I didn't have a happy time during that epidemic, for so many people were ill in the hotel at the same time that there was no way of getting a trained nurse for my family, and I had to attend to them and the baby also. We turned our apartments into an infirmary, with the exception of one room in which the baby had to stay. He wasn't a little baby; in fact, he was two and a half years old, solid and

* By courtesy of "St. Nicholas Magazine."

substantial for his age, and, though I do say it myself, he was an unusually active and intelligent child—how active I never quite realized before.

However, as it turned out, the first day of the tonsillitis visitation he had sprained his leg, or hurt it in some way, and was unable to walk. He had to be carried everywhere. In passing, for a month after this, whenever he got lazy and wanted to be “cawied,” his thoughts would recur to the halcyon sprained-leg days when I was his porter, and the leg would suddenly pain him again! Well, at the time I thought this enforced “immobility” was a terrible hardship—for me—for he was a stout, well-built, heavy youngster, and it was quite a job to “tote” him around all day long except at my hourly visits to the sick members of the household for the purpose of administering nauseous medicine; but it had its advantages, as I afterwards learned, for when he was put down anywhere he “stayed put.” He was very careful of that game leg of his; consequently, I was entirely safe in leaving him. The next day it was better at intervals—the leg, I mean, and so were the other patients—but he still required a good deal of carrying; and as he gained more freedom of motion, he did manage to get into some mischief. He was not up to his capacity, however. The third day he was well. The tonsillitis invalids were also able to take their own medicine without my help. As I had been kept in the house with that baby for two days, I thought it advisable for his health and my own comfort to get outdoors.

The hotel fronted on a beautiful little lake. At the foot of the bluff upon which it stood was a boat-house. Like all Adirondack boat-houses, a sloping platform ran from the boat-racks into and under the water. You put your boat on the platform, shove it off yourself, and spring in as it glides away, or you get in first and someone else does the shoving for you. The baby wanted to go fishing. He wasn't an expert angler, never having caught anything, although he fished patiently with a pin hook and twine from the end of a switch.

His leg had become well with astonishing suddenness, and as he frisked down the path, clinging to my hand, he seemed as active as ever. I had dressed him—painfully, it must be admitted, being unused to a task of that kind—in his best suit of clothes. I put on this suit partly because it happened to be the first one in the bureau drawer. I got the boat out with the assistance of the boatman, and was preparing to enter it, when the baby dropped a ball he was carrying. It rolled down the platform and slipped into the water. He darted after it. Somebody screamed as they saw him plunge forward. I looked up, made a step forward and clutched him.

You can't imagine how slippery that platform was under water. I never dreamed that anything made of wood could be so sleek. I lifted up the baby, and made a frantic effort to keep my balance. In vain! Out went my feet, and down we both went sprawling. It seemed to me we didn't stop until we had shot twenty feet out into the lake. I kept tight hold

of the baby, who was now yelling at the top of his voice. He kept up his screaming until he was soused under. Fortunately, I am an expert swimmer, and I easily lifted him out of the water—at least his head—and swam around to the landing-place and scrambled ashore.

Then he began roaring again. He wasn't the only one who roared either, for the boat-house was filled with people. It was usually empty at that hour of the morning, but on this particular day it seemed to me that everybody in the hotel was there. As we climbed out they roared, too—but with laughter. I could not see anything funny then. I shook the baby, I'll admit, but—merely to shake the water out of him, or off of him, of course.

“What are you crying about?” I asked desperately.

The cause of his weeping is clear to me now, but at the time it was inexplicable.

“What do you want?” I continued as there was no abatement of his cries.

“I duss want to be excruged for fallin' in de water,” he sobbed out at last.

I had to “excruge” him right then and there before he stopped screaming. Wet and bedraggled we trailed across the road and up to our apartments. We had to change every stitch we had on. Having recovered from this impromptu bath we started out on our original expedition, our first failure only making the baby more determined.

This time we entered the boat without any

mishap, I rowed out into the lake, and the youngster cast his line and began. I had a book, the day was pleasant, and I sat reading, glancing at him occasionally to see that he didn't get into mischief. He was quite content to fish there for hours without any result. He had the true spirit of Izaak Walton in him, I think, and when he was fishing was the only time in his life that he remained still and kept quiet, so I encouraged the pastime. The boat drifted slowly along, the absorbed angler watching his hook. Suddenly I heard an excited scream from the stern-sheets. The small boy had risen and was dancing frantically up and down on the seat, holding his fishing-pole with both hands, yelling, "I dot a fis'! I dot a fis'!"

It was somewhat of a problem whether he had "dot a fis'" or the "fis'" had "dot" him; but before I could take in the fact that the line was taut as a wire and the young angler was holding on desperately, he pitched wildly overboard. I made a hasty movement to save him and, by ill-luck, overturned the cranky boat. I caught him by the leg just as he went down again, fearing lest the fish, which seemed as strong as a whale, might tow him across the lake.

As I said before, I was a good swimmer, even with my clothes on. This was a second time that day I had a chance to display my prowess in the water. The baby didn't cry this time. The true spirit of the sportsman was in him. He just shut his little teeth and hung on to that rod with two chubby little

fists. I swam to the boat, tossed him upon the bottom of it, and then started to push the boat to the shore. The baby never let go of his prize, but kept on exclaiming: "I dot a fis'!"

Meanwhile some one from the shore rowed out and towed us in. We furnished a good deal of amusement for the hotel that day. People apparently expected something to happen to us, for a larger crowd than before was at the boat-house as we landed. My thoughts were too deep for utterance, and all the baby did was to hold up his pole proudly and draw attention to the fish dangling from the end of it. That fish was about three inches long.

"I taught him; I taught dat fis'!" he said to the assemblage, his voice shrill with excitement. "I duss hooked him, an' I didn't let go, and my papa holded me up."

It was an effective speech, if I may judge by the results. I have thought since that he would make a capital comedian, if the chief function of a comedian is to make people laugh.

Well, we made another trip to our apartments and changed our clothes a second time. It was Monday, and two weeks' laundry had just gone. Our stock of clothes therefore, was running rather low. I think my son seemed to have the faculty of getting more rumpled and mussed when I had him in charge than he ordinarily did when accompanied by his nurse. We got our dinner, and proceeded to go forth in search of more amusement.

This time we walked. I had had enough of the

water, for that day at least; so we strolled around the foot of the lake, toward the bowling alley which was on the other side. I had an engagement with one of the guests for a bowling match that afternoon. The baby enjoyed going there. He had the free range of the place, so long as he kept off the alleys, and he usually had great fun playing with the little balls.

The only people bowling that afternoon were the man and myself. The other alleys were free. The baby played in these empty alleys, rolling the little balls around, and almost every time he rolled a ball he slipped and fell on the polished floor. So long, however, as he did not fall heavily enough to hurt himself we paid no especial attention to him, but kept on with our game. Consequently we didn't notice his absence until we heard a fearful howl from the adjoining room.

We dashed into the room, which was used as a locker room, beyond which lay the shower baths. He was in the middle of the big square shower—one of those things with many pipes which throw the water at you from all directions. It was so arranged that one swing of a lever opened every one of them. He had wandered in there and had pulled the lever. They were all going hard. That infant was seated on the floor in the middle of the shower, the water streaming upon him in every possible direction. It was lucky none of it was hot water it being summer.

He may have been weeping,—of course we could not tell the water from tears under the circumstances,

—but his lung power had not been diminished by his exploits of the day, and he was screaming lustily for help.

Really it was an extraordinarily funny sight, and I am ashamed to say my friend and I laughed. As soon as we could recover ourselves a little, I directed that baby to come out. He was usually an obedient child, but either he didn't hear me or he was too scared to come forth; certainly he didn't heed my commands.

He sat there as solid as a pyramid, the water streaming down upon him. Threats, commands, appeals were alike useless. There was no help for it: I myself had to turn that water off and get him. The controlling lever was behind him. It was too far for me to reach in and turn it off; I had to go in. My laughter ceased rather suddenly, but my inconsiderate friend continued to see the humor of the situation with even more force than before. The way he laughed was exasperating!

Well, there was no use waiting any longer. In I plunged boldly, found the lever, turned off the water, took that infant, and started home. It was a triumphal march we made through the village, around the end of the lake, back to the hotel. I never knew until that day how many of the guests were accustomed to take walks through that woodland path. And they were so interested in us, too.

“What, again?”

“How many times does this make?”

“Well, you are certainly fond of the water!”

"Why don't you get a bathing-suit?"

"Or a rubber coat?"

"I declare" (this from some motherly old ladies),
"it's a shame to treat a baby so!"

"He isn't fit to be trusted with a child, anyway."

"Where's the poor thing's mother?"

Such were some of the comments of those unfeeling people.

I took that young man up to our apartments for the third time that day, and this time put him to bed. He hadn't said a word to me during our interesting walk home, and he did not until I was tucking him under the sheets, there to remain while some of his wardrobe was drying. Then, as I bent over him, looking as stern and inexorable and disgusted as a man could well look who had undergone such mishaps, he reached up his little arms, drew my head toward him, and whispered:

"Are you mad, papa? 'Cause if you're mad, I duss want to be exceruged:

After that I had to "exceruge" him again. My! but I was glad when night came.

The next day the nurse was able to assume her responsibilities once more, and I cheerfully relinquished that delectable infant into her keeping. I have a great respect for that nurse, she managed him so easily—a most remarkable young woman, indeed! I never appreciated what a necessary adjunct to the family happiness and safety she was. And I earnestly trust that if the family is again laid low by tonsillitis, its attacks will come "piecemeal"

and always leave free at least one member more skilled than I to undertake the care of this very dear but very strenuous youngster.

II

THE SECOND ADVENTURE *

The baby did not go alone, of course. No! He was too young to do that, being only three and a half years old at this time. Jim and I went with him. He took us, or we took him, I don't know which exactly, neither does Jim; anyway, it does not matter very much—we all three went together, and in spite of the baby's mother! I think the mother wanted very much to go along, so did Mrs. Jim, and the little girl, and the maids, but we really could not take everybody, you see; we had to draw the line somewhere, so we drew it at the ladies. "I dest want to do wif de men," said the baby proudly, and as it was preëminently his own particular fishing excursion, we had to humor him, of course.

Jim—he is forty-seven years old, if he is a day!—was very fond of the baby, and it was not his baby either, it was mine. I don't usually call the baby "it," seeing that he is a little boy, but that time it seemed more grammatical to do so.

But where was I? Oh, yes, talking about Jim! Jim—he had other names than that, of course, big, handsome, grown-up names like you see in story-

* By courtesy of "Lippincott's Magazine."

books—had a fishing and hunting lodge in the mountains of Minnesota, not far from the Mississippi River. We all sailed down the river with the baby in a little stern-wheeled steamboat called the Cyclone! And it was the tamest, quietest cyclone I was ever caught in out West. It was very pleasant up in the pilot-house, and being an old sailor myself, the captain let me steer the boat while the baby and Jim and Mrs. Jim and Jim's little girl and the baby's mother and the maids all ate peanuts! They ate five large bags too. The baby wanted to steer the boat himself, but we persuaded him to accept peanuts instead.

The lodge—they called it Brook Lodge—was a most delightful place. There was a log house for the grown-ups, with a men's side and a woman's side, separated by a curtain which was tucked up during the day. It—the cabin, that is—had eight sleeping-berths in it, two in each corner, one above the other, like a Pullman car, and in the end of it was a huge rock fireplace. There was another log cabin for the children and the maids,—the baby slept there,—and still another house for a kitchen, named the Waldorf-Astoria. The dining-room was made out of wire screens bolted together, with a canvas roof over it; there was an ice-house, a stable, and so on; and the bath-room was a tent with a real tin tub in it on a board floor.

It was quite dark when we drove up to the place, and we all had to work very hard for awhile opening the cabins, preparing supper, building fires, carrying

water, and getting ready for the night. Jim believed in everybody working. Even the baby worked; he ran around everywhere and bossed the job—he and Jim. As for me, I brought in seventeen large logs for the fire!—a thing I had not attempted since I was a boy and had to do chores at home.

The lodge stood on the top of a high hill covered with trees, which happened to be situated just where three valleys met; through each of them ran a little brook filled with fish. The whole place was surrounded with mountains, and out there they had farms on the mountain tops! We could see the brown wheat-fields on the crests. The baby had caught just one solitary fish in all his life. That was in the Adirondacks the year before. He capsized the boat with me in it when he caught it, and he remembered about it and wanted to do it again—catch fish, I mean, not capsize a boat, of course; that part he did not like at all, neither did I! So Jim, who was the nicest fellow in the world and great chums with the baby, planned to take him fishing in the morning.

That morning it rained. I never saw it rain cats-and-dogs, but if it ever did or could rain cats-and-dogs, I am sure it would have done it then. The baby was miserable; so were we. It looked as though it would rain forever. We wanted to take him anyway, rain or no rain, but the baby's mother said *no*. She put her foot down too when she said it. The baby's mother's foot is small, but the baby and I have learned that when it comes down it covers all the necessary territory. So we had to amuse our-

selves the best way we could before the log fires in the cabins, praying and hoping the rain would cease. Meanwhile we busied ourselves by getting everything ready in case it ever did clear.

Sure enough, at about three o'clock the rain at last stopped. It was cold and damp; the sky remained overcast and threatening; the woods, the fields, and especially the weeds and grass bordering the brooks, were soaking wet; and the brooks themselves were full to overflowing with dark, muddy water. The prospects for good fishing, therefore, were not brilliant. Unfortunately, we could only spend one day at the lodge, so we had to go fishing then or not at all. Besides, we really wanted to go—to take him, that is. So we begged the baby's mother,—at least we got Mrs. Jim to do it for us,—and at last she said we might take him, although she knew it would be the death of him.

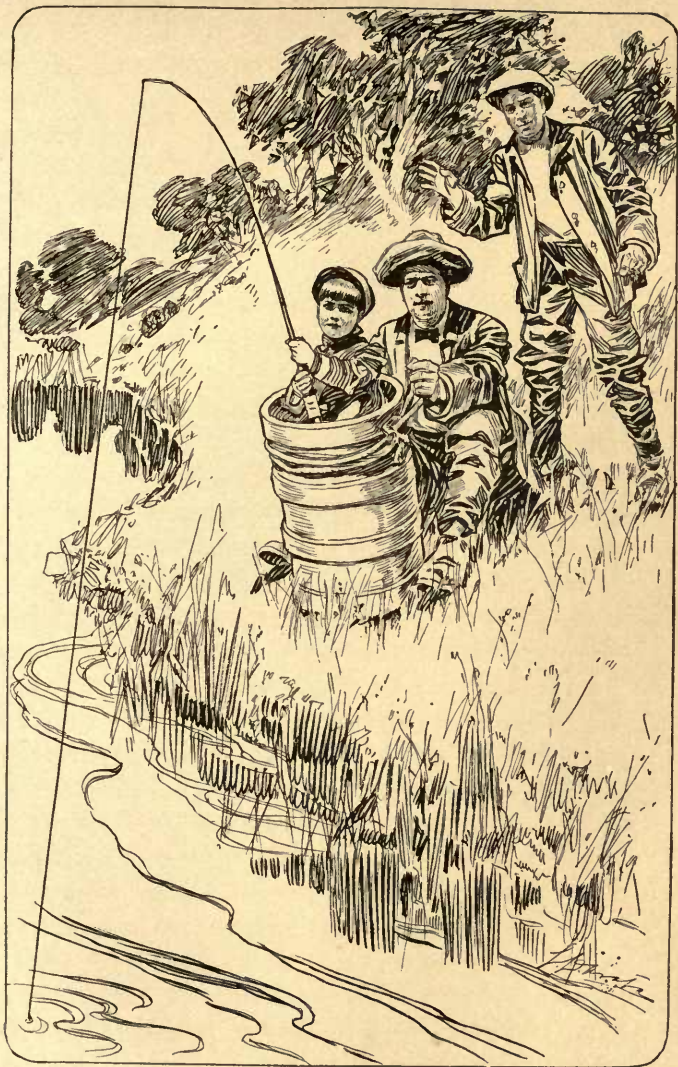
We fixed him up for the occasion with great care. We did not wish to kill the baby because we—he, I mean—wanted to go fishing. A pair of rubber boots belonging to Jim's little girl were brought out. The baby eyed them dubiously while the rest of us smiled. "You won't laugh at me, mamma," he said nervously, "w'en I det 'em on me, will you?" The baby, like most persons,—male persons, that is,—objected to being laughed at. The boots came up to his middle nearly. We covered his overcoat with an old blue sweater, too large for him, which came down to his boots, and then we put one of Jim's old caps on his head. He looked so funny when he was

dressed finally that his mother and Mrs. Jim and the others had to go out behind the cabin and laugh into the rain-barrels for fear he would hear them and have his feelings hurt. Babies have feeling, you know, just like boys and girls and grown-ups. Jim and I did not laugh. We were proud of our handiwork. So was the baby. You should have seen him.

During the day we had given much thought to the question of transportation. The baby could not walk in those boots, or through the wet weeds either. We had to carry him, that was certain. Jim suggested that we take him in a barrel. Mrs. Jim and the baby's mother said that was absurd, but we thought not. So Jim hunted up a cement-barrel, and I, being an old sailor, made a rope sling with two handles to it to carry the barrel.

Well, we had it ready at last, and into it we loaded the baby with the bait and some other things, and each seizing a handle we started off down the hill, the whole family looking gleefully on. The baby was very doubtful about the barrel. It was too short, we soon found, and as the baby's weightiest part is his head—he is a very large-headed, brainy infant—the whole contrivance with him in it was decidedly top-heavy, and lurched to and fro frightfully as we slipped and stumbled down the steep, wet hill. It is a wonder he was not pitched out. The baby was plucky, however, and he held to the barrel tightly, but when we reached the bottom he ejaculated quite brokenly between swings,

“Dis barrel makes me awshul sick!”



He got a fierce bite.—Page 103

It was enough to make an old sailor like myself seasick, I guess. So we took him out. Away up at the top of the hill the ladies, who could see us quite plainly, were yelling:

“We told you so!”

But we did not pay any attention to them then, as you may imagine.

After that one of us carried the baby pickaback, while the other one carried the barrel, the rod, the bait, and the other things. We took turns carrying the baby; he was the heaviest, although the barrel and the other things were most awkward to handle. Jim carried the baby most of the time. He hasn't had so many babies to carry as I have and it was more of a novelty to him than to me, so I let him gladly. You have no idea how heavy that baby got before we reached the creek. I never knew before that a child's weight could increase so greatly in so short a time. It seemed a long time too.

Well, we reached what looked like a good place for fishing at last. We stood the baby down in the grass temporarily, and while Jim baited the hook I fixed our famous fishing-barrel as close to the water's edge as possible, so as to make a nice, dry, convenient place for the baby to fish from. Then I sat down in the wet grass and held the barrel by the rope handle to keep it from sliding into the creek. Then Jim put the baby in the barrel, handed him the small rod, and proceeded to give him his first lesson.

The baby was an apt pupil. In about ten seconds he got a fierce bite. He pulled frantically, and out

of the water came a big sucker about a foot long! I don't know which was the more surprised, the sucker or the baby. The infant yelled like mad and dropped the rod. We did not know just why he yelled—fear or excitement, perhaps both. Anyway, Jim grabbed the pole and I grabbed him with one hand, so we did not all slide into the brook then. We gave the baby the pole again and he finally landed the fish high and dry on the bank. As it lay flapping and wriggling in the grass he eyed it gleefully and shouted and screamed and clapped his hands with triumphant joy. We did too. It was as much fun as going-to-the-circus-with-the-children used to be.

We all made so much noise over this first capture at that place that there was no use in trying it there any longer, so we unhooked the fish, put it in the fishing bag slung over the baby's shoulder, and started off again.

This time we found a likely trout-hole. We were most anxious to have the baby catch a trout, if possible. So we fixed things as before and cautioned him to be very quiet, as trout do not like noise. He was as still as a mouse after we got him planted in his barrel again, rod in hand. It was a bad day for trout, but we almost had one, at least we thought so, when the baby suddenly broke the exciting silence by a fearsome howl!

"Sh-sh-sh!" I said, but the howling only increased in volume.

"What's the matter?" asked Jim.

"Dis fish is bitin' me in de stummick!" wailed the baby, pointing to the bag, which had slipped around so that it hung before his waist-band. The fish he had caught and placed in the bag had suddenly commenced wriggling, which had scared the young angler out of his wits. Of course, we lost that trout.

We explained matters and quieted him down. In the middle of it all he got another bite, dropped the rod, and away it went. Jim got it, he also got very wet, but when the baby pulled out his second fish, another sucker, he said he did not mind it—getting wet, I mean.

Well, we fished the brook for about five miles, more or less, and the baby caught one sucker per mile. The last effort was attended by several circumstances of an unusual and dramatic nature.

The bank of the creek was everywhere very slippery and the standing-ground very narrow. I planted my heels in the ooze and sat down with my back against the bank, holding the barrel between my knees, on one of which Jim calmly and recklessly sat down. They were all depending upon me, you see. In the excitement of catching the last fish something gave way, my feet slipped; how it ever happened I cannot explain—of course it was the baby's fault, since he brought us fishing. Anyway, we all fell in. That is, Jim and I did. As we slipped we both desperately caught at the barrel and lifted it clear of the water. The baby gallantly hung on to the edge with one hand and with the other clutched desperately the rod. When matters quieted down

again he calmly remarked to his two faithful servitors—Jim and I, you know—standing breast high in the ice-cold water above our waists.

“I dot anudder fish!”

Inasmuch as the fish had been flapping in our faces for the last half minute, we were quite aware of the fact.

We put the baby, still in his barrel, back on the bank again, clambered out of the brook slowly, sadly sat down by the barrel and emptied the water out of our long wading-boots and looked plaintively at the young fisherman. He was a wise baby indeed. I said before that he was large-headed and brainy. He returned our mournful and beseeching gaze with interest and at last remarked gravely:

“I dess I’ll do home now. I had anush.”

We too had “anush.” So we carried him back over the hills and through the fields and far away—awfully “far away,” by the way—till we reached the lodge again. There he was received, with his six suckers and his two servitors, with open arms by his mother and by Mrs. Jim, and by the little girl and all the rest. I guess they were glad they had not gone along when they saw us.

The next morning was bright and sunny. We had an hour or two at our disposal before the time for leaving came. We dressed him up as before and “kodaked” him. That baby wanted to go fishing again, but this time we demurred. As I said before, we had had “anush” to last us for some time—and it was Sunday, anyway.

Sixth Record

DIVIDED

A ROMANCE OF THE MOUNTAINS *

I

He was an artist; she was a dreamer; both were poets. They were alone together on the roof of the world, above them nothing but heaven, beneath them all of the earth.

"There," the guide had said, "you c'n see fer yourself. That's the summit. It's the highest p'int in the range."

"We would rather go forward alone; I know the place," said the man, as the mountaineer made as if to show them the way.

"Jest as you like," returned the other. "Be careful of the cliff on the far side. I'll go down to the camp, an' me an' my wife'll git the things ready fer the night."

There was a great contrast between the two left on the crest. Not in height, for he was but slightly above the middle size, and she but slightly beneath him as they stood side by side. But he was all strength and vigor, like the splendid canvases he painted, while she was all delicacy and grace, like the visions she saw, the dreams she dreamed.

* By courtesy of "The Twentieth Century Home."

Without his aid, she would never have mastered the almost insurmountable difficulties of the lonely mountain. It was the guide's part, as a rule, to help the woman, but he had jealously reserved that privilege for himself. His hand had led her upward. She dreamed and prayed, he hoped and determined, that so it should be for life.

The way was easy now, but the habit of the morning nestled her hand in his as they stepped over the broken rock toward the pinnacle on the summit. The mountain, precipitous on all sides, rose to a point where it fronted the west, like the great bow of a mighty ship cleaving an ocean of air. Thence it fell away in a sheer sweep of cleft rock, until the precipice was lost in the pine trees a thousand feet below.

He had been there often before and was familiar with the scene. It was at his insistence that she had essayed the difficult and dangerous task. He had brought her there with deep and serious purpose. There was one spot which lacked but her presence to be to him the vertex of the world—the universe, even; and thither, with steps of increasing slowness, and with a deepening gravity of port and mien, as one approaches with bated breath the realization of a cherished hope, grasps at the embodiment of a precious dream, he led her. Hand in hand they stepped unto it, and “God He knoweth how blythe they were.”

At the very apex of the point, wind or weather, rain or sun, heat or cold, or mayhap the hand of God, had scooped out a little hollow in the old Laurentian

rock—first of all the earth's surface to lift its head above the vasty deep in the world's morning. It was the oldest and greatest of all earthly thrones. The rock descended in a few natural steps, and then spread out flatly in front of the pinnacle for a few feet, before it fell sheer away in the swimming abyss, with plunge and depth appalling to the stoutest heart.

Tenderly, daintily, with courtesy, with reverence and worship—for he loved her—he led her there. He enthroned her in that regal chair of the ages, then stepped back upon the dizzy verge and turned and looked at her. From one of his temperament the action was in itself a compliment, the force of which could not be misunderstood.

Before her lay unrolled such a panorama as does not often delight human vision. The mountain was in the center of a vast crescent of mighty peaks only less exalted than itself. Broken ranges of slightly less altitude sprang irregularly from the great semicircle, diminishing miles away in softly rounded hills, that lost themselves in level vistas of distant plains. Valleys inaccessible, unseen, their very existence not dreamed of except by those who overlooked them from above, lay at her feet.

The sunlight of the west in splendor, though fading in the sky, flashed through the rifts in the foothills and fell upon tiny lakelets in borders of emerald that dotted the prospect, mellowing the sublime into the tender and the beautiful. It was a scene to fill a painter's eye and a poet's mind. Again and again

he had essayed to paint it, only to throw aside his brush in despair. Again and again he had returned to it, only to be filled anew with a sense of its splendor, its beauty, and his own impotence.

At that hour it was nothing to him. In the face of the world with all its appeal, he was looking at the woman.

The sight was novel to her. He had told her little about it. She was quite unprepared for it. It appealed to her as profoundly as it did to him. While he placed her on that throne he kept himself between her and the prospect, and it was not until he had stepped aside that the magnificence of it burst upon her. He could see the look of sudden surprise leap into her eyes; he could mark the quick intake of the breath, the pause in her bosom's fall, as if her heart had hesitated in its beating for a moment.

Then she looked at him. In the face of the world, the woman returned the look of the man.

Something leaped within their hearts that transcended nature, that was greater than all that was material beneath them, even though fashioned by the hand of God. He and she on the mountain top—love, the world forgetting, by the world forgot. That one look repaid him. He stepped closer to her, sank down at her feet on the spur of the rock, a step of the throne, and she leaned forward a little, resting her hand upon his shoulder. They were silent while they gazed.

“After you,” said the man at last, “I love this.”

He threw his head back and the woman smiled down upon him.

"After you," she said, softly, triumph mingling with passion, "I love—nothing."

In a woman's heart there are depths which a man may not sound; there is more of God's image in one woman's soul than in the souls of many men. Upon them is the touch divine that has made them women and beloved. In that hour the man knew this.

"Yours is best," he said, humbly. "I am at your feet, happy to be there to learn from you light and truth, and what sums them all up—love."

His strong face softened; the firm, set lines relaxed a little. He bowed over her slender hand; the other she laid upon his head.

"You are here," he said, at last, "where I have dreamed of you, where I fain would have you, and here I am where I fain would be—at your feet."

"No, no, we are here together. That is better," she made answer. "You should be by my side, or you should be here and I there."

It was the strife of self-abnegation that well-nigh sets the seal divine upon human passion.

"There is no room on earth for another where you sit; and no one could by rights be by your side."

"Hush!" she answered softly; "it is sacrilege."

"The truth, only the truth. You sum up humanity to me. I want no one, nothing else. I am satisfied with the satisfaction that craves a little

more and receives a little more with each passing hour."

"And I, too, want nothing else. We are here together, alone, the world below us, beneath us, in the distant beyond, or in the swift-vanishing past."

"Would you like it to be so always?"

"Forever!"

"Listen! Nay, first look."

As he spoke, he rose and pointed far down the mountain.

"Follow my hand," he said; "there!"

Her glance swept along the outstretched arm.

"Why, it is a heart!" she exclaimed.

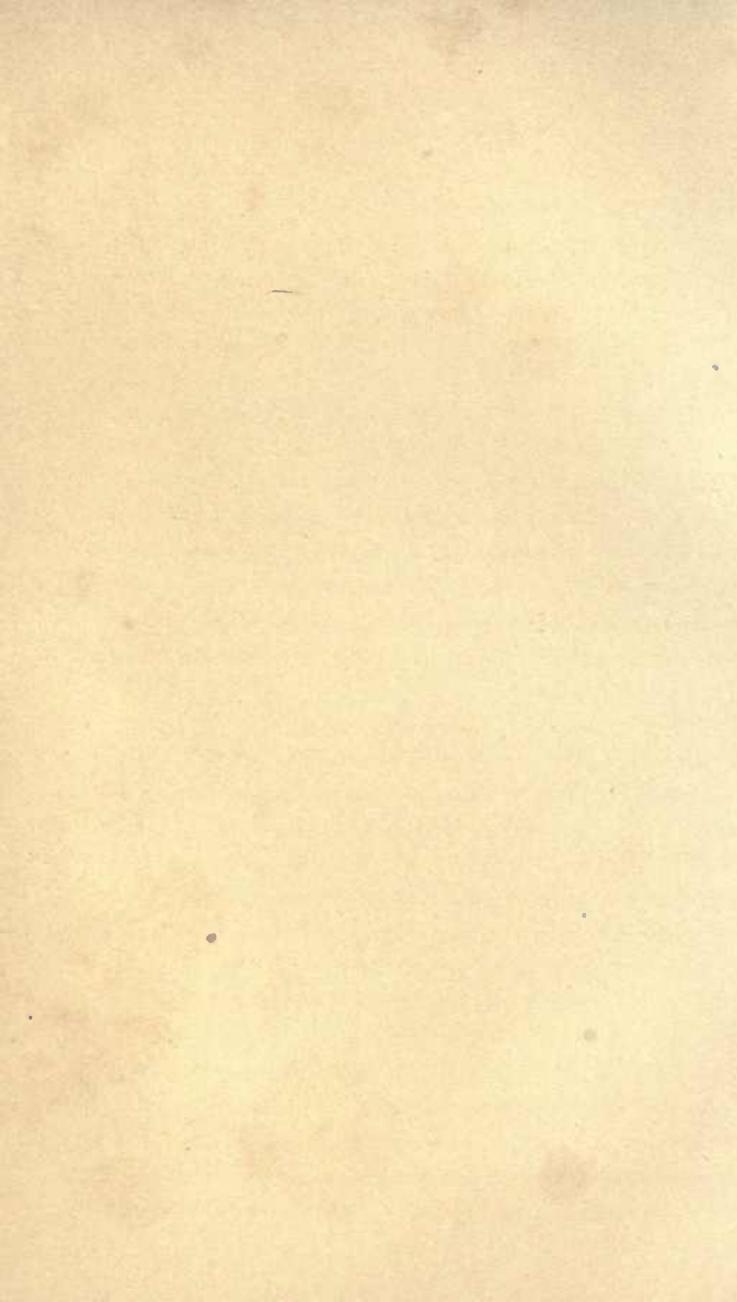
"Yes, Lake Heart, I named it. At the head of the lake there is a little hill. Do you see it?"

"Distinctly."

"It overlooks that little heart-shaped stretch of water. See how it nestles on the side of this great mountain. Opposite it lies another mountain. One standing there would have the whole sweep of this mighty range in full view. On that little knoll I would build a house—our house. Build it out of the fragrant pines that shade the mountain sides. Rude it should be on the outside; the interior I would line with mother-of-pearl. There we would go. It would be silent, still. No one could come there; we would be alone. I could paint; you could help me. You could write; perhaps I could help you. We would be far away from the world. We need not know from day to day how the current of human passion ebbed and flowed out yonder, who lived or



"Stop!" he cried;
"just as you are!"—Page 113



who died, who rose or who fell, but we would work and live and love—together.”

“It is enough,” said the woman; “when I am free I will go with you.”

“Because I suggested it?”

“Because I want no greater happiness than that.”

“It shall be so,” said the man, putting out his hand.

Unhesitatingly she met it with her own, rising at the same time under some controlling impulse. The contract was ratified by no kiss, no enfolding embrace, not by heart beating against heart, but by that simple, strong, pervading clasp. They were facing the future hand in hand. It was he who broke the pause.

“Stop!” he cried; “just as you are!”

She stood slightly bent forward, her weight resting upon her right foot, her left hand upon the rocky arm, her right hand outstretched and warm from his clasp. She had taken off the knitted mountain cap she wore, and the soft wind of the evening—it was absolutely calm in the valley and but the slightest current of air stirred on the mountain-top—swept her hair, lightened by the sun’s last kiss, back from her sweet low brow. The dark blue of her dress blended with the weather-beaten background of the ancient mountain. There was a dash of color in her usually pale cheeks. She was a sight to make a man forget the world.

Pencil and paper, which he was never without,

were in his hands. Swiftly, as one would fain seize and hold a final moment, he sketched the outlines of the picture, her head and shoulders, partly turned from him, rising in silhouette against the pale grayness of the eastern sky. Catching some of the spirit that actuated him, she held her pose motionless for what seemed to be an incredible time. Suddenly the sun dropped behind the screen of hills. Her hand fell to her side. The sketch was over; she was weary. She tottered, and would have fallen, but that he held her close. There had been something so tense, so nervous, in the situation, she was overwhelmed with sudden feeling.

"How thoughtless of me!" he cried, remorseful, seeing her weakness.

"Did you finish?"

"Yes."

They stood together for one last glimpse. There were deep shadows in the valleys; the light was gone from the little lakes; the emerald of the pines was turned into shrouding darkness. Here and there in front of them, the fading light streamed softly beyond the crest of hills in pale, nebulous bars. Before them, clear and cold, gleamed a sudden silver star in the twilight. It was strangely cold. She shivered slightly in his arms.

"I can paint it now," he said; "it has the human touch of human life at last."

He drew gently and carefully from the edge of the sheer precipice and together they turned away.

II

She was the last representative of an ancient colonial family which had owned large estates on the banks of the Delaware in New Jersey for generations. Her father—a stern, cold, unsympathetic man, forever in arms against her because she had not been a son—had spent much of his early life in England, where he had been educated, where he had imbibed habits, thoughts and prejudices which are outside of and beyond the realm of books. The estates had come to him heavily encumbered, and he had not succeeded in diminishing the charges upon them. An opportunity to recoup the family fortunes had been provided through the beauty of his daughter and the passion—the more powerful and persistent because it was that of an old man—of a friend of his whose estates adjoined his own.

She had known this man for years, and to know him was to esteem and like him. She was a delicately nurtured, retiring girl, educated mainly at home in accordance with her father's ideas. She had seen nothing of the outside world, and it was quite natural, therefore, that, at her father's insistence, and at the pleading of the old man, who really loved her, she had engaged herself to marry him. The state of her health had caused her father to send her to spend the summer in the mountains. One of his friends had a camp there, and he had invited the girl to be his guest.

Her sojourn had been in every way beneficial. Her health had improved greatly, the pulmonary tendency which had so alarmed her father and her betrothed had disappeared. Altogether it had been a satisfactory experiment except in one particular. This untutored, inexperienced girl, pledged to a man as old as her father, for whom she had no feeling other than respect and esteem—this unworldly child of an artificial rearing, without knowledge or experience of life—had been brought face to face with nature in more shapes than river and lake, mountain and valley.

In the camp there was another guest, a young artist, whose reputation was already national. As the clear air, the bright sunlight, the fragrant balm of the pine-clad hills, had entered her being, and she had drunk in nature, so also had the passion of the man, which had sprung into existence at a glance, entered her soul. She had been made over physically, and spiritually as well. For the first time in her life, she knew what love was. She found its reality beyond all the artless dreams in which she had indulged. He had surprised her in her innocence and inexperience, and she had yielded her affection to him without hesitation, almost without thought.

It was not until she had found herself pledged to him, and the natural demand of her lover that she should name some day upon which he could claim her for his own, was pressed upon her, that she realized that she was bound to another. Her

conceptions of honor were as strong and inflexible as the rocky trails that had upborne her in many a beloved walk with him among the hills; while her ideas of the obedience due from child to parent were as deep-rooted as those of her father. Sometimes, as on the crest of that final cloud-piercing peak, she forgot what lay behind. The fetters of custom and habit and honor fell away; her passion rose with his own, and swept her into a new world which knew nothing but the love they bore for each other.

But it was not always so, and then the man tried to reason with her; he even tried to laugh her scruples to scorn. The most that she would promise, in her serious moments, was that if by any honorable method she could be released from her obligation, and could win her father's consent, she would give herself to him unreservedly.

She had lingered in this lover's paradise, hesitant and reluctant to put her fate to the touch, and he, thinking to bind her the more irrevocably, had encouraged her to delay. But they had come out of the world of dreams in which they had lived at last, and finally she made the plunge. She wrote to her father of this new love in her heart, and begged him to consent, and to secure the consent of the man to whom she was betrothed, to the breaking of the old engagement and the making of the new. The answer came back after many days, for this was long ago and the facilities of travel were not what they are at present. That answer was a prompt,

unqualified negative, with a peremptory demand that she should return home immediately.

Cast down, but not despairing, she wrote again. This time not only to her father but to the other man. The two old men must have considered the letters together, for the letter that came back was from both. The father pointed out the worldly advantages of the match, laid upon her with all the force in his possession the duty of obedience to a parent, and linked and fettered the woman with the chains of an obligation, a plighted word, an honor to maintain.

The old lover pleaded and made many promises. One more effort the girl made. She wrote this time to her father alone and told him that she could not live without this man. That into her lonely life this love had blossomed, how and why she could not tell. It had entwined itself around the foundations of her existence and to uproot it meant destruction. Life and love—they went together. She would obey him thus far—she would come home immediately and reinforce her plea with her personal appeal. But she begged him to write her at a place appointed on her return journey.

Then they separated, these two. The girl made no secret of her love; indeed, she could not, nor had she the desire. He pleaded with her, and her only appeal from him was her consciousness of duty, her sense of obligation; and before that he bowed, he fell, and where he fell there he would fain have died.

"If," she said, at last, "I can do it with honor, I will come back to you. If not, I bid you farewell."

When they parted, it was as if death had stepped between them. As she had said, she went alone down the mighty river and across the great lake on her homeward way. When she reached the hotel by the side of the water, the roar of whose falls fills the ear with a strange yet terrible sound, she found a letter from her father in answer to her last one.

"You must come home. You must marry the man to whom you have plighted yourself, and to whom I have passed my word. Your duty, your honor, call you. You must forget this other man."

That was all. After she read it, she sat still and thought upon it; and as she thought, the bitterness of death passed away from her. She wrote a few words to her father, a few words of explanation without justifying herself at all. Then she drew another sheet of paper closer and wrote upon it her lover's name. Then she stopped. There was nothing that she could say to him then that she had not said before, nothing that she could tell him now that she had not told him often. Where she was going she could not tell, but she did not believe there was a place on earth or in heaven from which her soul could not speak to his. He would know and understand. Love could bridge whatever gap there might be.

She left the letter for her father on the table, nothing else. She went down to the river bank and

walked up it during the long afternoon, under the wild blazoning of the autumn leaves, until she found a boat. She cast it adrift and seized the oars. He had taught her how to use them. She was very tired from her long walk, but she resolutely drove it into the middle of the stream.

Although she was now far above the falls, the current was already swift. It needed a stronger and more powerful arm than hers to cope with that mighty downward rush of water; his might have accomplished it, but not hers alone. Out in the middle of the river, where the full force of the current caught her, she cast adrift the oars. With the swiftness of thought itself, she was swept down. She sat low in the center of the boat, her head buried in her arms, her arms folded on her bended knees.

She was thinking of him, of that peak on the mountain-top, of that little lake like a heart in that sequestered valley where they had planned to spend the long years of their life. She had closed her eyes—she needed no other light. She was thinking of him.

The roaring of the falls broke on her ear unheeded. There were people upon the shore. She swept by a little island and did not hear the shrill, terror-full cries of those who watched her not a stone's throw away. The boat rocked and pitched frightfully.

She was drenched with spray, thrown this side and that. Instinctively she put out her hand to

steady herself, raised her head, opened her eyes. She was on the brink. She lifted her hands high in the air as if to grasp a mountain peak. She saw a face as in a dream.

III

Back in the hills he waited, with a growing certainty that his wait would never be terminated. It was a month, perhaps, before he learned the whole truth. When the realization came to him, he fled to the mountain-top once more. Again he stood upon the giddy verge. One little movement, one relaxation of the muscles even, and he was gone. Death would meet him in mid-air long before he pitched upon the rocks hid in the pines at the foot of the cliff. As he stood there hesitant, yet determined, his eye fell upon the little lake shaped like a heart, silvery again in the emerald as on the day they had planned their future. Death! It was nothing. No death could separate love like theirs. Though he was here, and she was there, there was nothing between; they were side by side. He would carry out the plan. He would abide there and she would be with him. He kissed the spot where she had been enthroned and plunged down the mountains.

On that softly rounded knoll, he built that great log house of which they had dreamed. He built it slowly from year to year, and mainly with his own hands, with as little assistance as the requirements of

the situation necessitated. And there he lived alone. Save for an occasional visit to the nearest settlement for the necessities of life, he saw no one. The country was still a virgin wilderness. After a time, he laid aside his brush forever, but for occupation he added to his lodge; he made trails from the cabin to the summits of the everlasting hills about him. He roamed the mountains. Often from the low mountain which he named for her, he watched the peak where they had planned. In the long winters he had his books, and now and again a wild four-footed friend who found him unique in the race of men in that he was not an enemy. Indeed, he loved all except his kind.

One day, a wandering hunter, a halfbreed, French and Indian, fell prostrate before the cabin door. He was desperately ill. The man took him in and nursed him back to health. The grateful halfbreed refused to leave him. He was as silent as his self-imposed master, and the two thenceforth lived together. Solitude was not a passion with the artist, though. Indeed, he did not know the word; he was never lonely, for as he walked the hills she was ever by his side.

So the years sped away. Railroads pierced the region. Great hotels rose upon the banks of its thousand lakes. It became the playground, the place of summer rest, for hundreds of thousands of people. He was not poor and he had bought a vast expanse of territory, as much as his means would permit, for himself. He owned the valley, the lake, the

mountain sides, and he allowed no one to settle there; but he could not prevent people from wandering thither. From time to time, at nightfall, those explorers or travelers sought shelter at the lodge. And it was freely given them.

Solitude had not dimmed the courtesy of the gentleman, or impaired the claims of hospitality. The great lodge with its many rooms, its high observatory tower, was theirs. They could roam at will through it. But there was one part in it that no human eye save his had ever seen, its threshold no human foot save his had ever crossed; not even the halfbreed, who had been his companion in his exile for so many years, knew what was there.

This was a great "L" that ran from one side of the building in the most open portion of the clearing. There was no window to it, the curious observed. If lighted at all it must have been through the roof. There was no door save that which opened from his own private apartment. Thoughtless people had asked him about it, but no one had ever asked him after the first time. It was a mystery which they could not solve.

He would have preferred to be left alone, entirely alone, with her. He loved the winter, for then the deep snows rendered the lodge impossible of access for any one. But the spring, before the people came back to the wilderness, was the most joyous season of the year to him. In the perennial freshness of reproducing nature, there was a more congenial atmosphere for her and love. His pas-

sion burned still in his breast as he had been a boy again.

He was a gray-haired old man now. She had been by his side for thirty years, yet she stepped along with the same airy freshness and innocence of girlhood of a youth eternal. Her eyes looked at him with the same brightness as in the days of long ago. Time had stood still for her, as the world had stood still for him since they had been—united.

That spring, there was a great drought in the land. Not a drop of rain laved the parched and weary earth for months. When the long days of June came, a party of careless campers left a partly extinguished fire in the forest. The live coals burrowed in subtle concealment under the thick carpet of pine-needles which had fallen since the days of the forest primeval, the fire coal growing greater and greater as it wormed its way along, until, by and by, a little brush heap burst into a glowing flame, which surged about the base of a mountain monarch until he yielded to the burning embrace, and in turn communicated the contagion of his fiery passion to a sister tree, and in the twinkling of an eye the forest was ablaze.

He discovered the peril immediately, and realized after a brief inspection that the course of his life would be forever changed unless by some means the fire could be diverted, for a mighty army of flame was blazing down upon him and his beloved lodge.

What could two men do to stop such a besom of

destruction? Working with frantic energy, the two toiled with the strength of ten. Even the halfbreed, who had not lived with his silent master for so many years without catching some of the latter's purpose, worked like a hero, but with no avail. Indeed, while they labored at one point the blaze swept by them on either side, and they were forced back to the cabin, exhausted, half dead with fatigue and apprehension, in the very focus of an eclipse of fire. A sudden strengthening of the wind already storming down the valley swept the flame upon them. The end of the lodge nearest the avalanche of fire was already blazing.

The man stood and gazed upon it, hopeless, impotent, broken-hearted. The halfbreed seized him by the arm to drag him away. The man shook his head, staring immovable a moment. Then, motioning backward, without turning, as if to signal the halfbreed to escape while there was yet time, he stepped toward the smoke-enshrouded door. A cry from the man caused him to turn around. The halfbreed was lying helpless on the ground bleeding from a wound in his leg. A sharp woodman's axe lay near at hand. It was no accident, though the man never suspected that. The faithful follower had cut himself in order to produce the result his love craved—to make his master come away. The man stood irresolute at the sight. But he could not leave the other man to die, so with a groan he turned, seized the slighter man in his arms, and plunged down through the trees toward the lake.

It was a terrible passage, for the tops of the pines were crackling with fire above his head. There was a boat on the lake. The lake itself was small, but the only possibility of escape was upon its surface. He laid his wounded companion gently down in the canoe and put the paddle in his hands. But he did not follow. He pushed the boat violently from him and sent it spinning out into the lake. Then he waved his hands in farewell, turned and staggered backward through the smoke and fire. This time he did not hear the frantic call from the man in the boat, nor did he see him ply his paddle madly, so that the boat was driven back to the shore whence it had been thrust away.

The man plunged into the smoke and flame, full of desperate endeavor yet not unmindful of required caution. He carefully shielded his head until he reached the house. People had often noticed the letters, his and her initials, wrought in the bark of the rail around the porch, wondering what they meant. This time they were outlined in fire, for the house was burning. The heat was terrific and the smoke suffocating.

The man sank down upon the threshold dying. He raised himself by a superhuman effort. He could not die there. In his extremity a figure stood beside him and helped him; a cool, slender hand was slipped in his. A voice whispered in his ear. He was on his feet once more. Youth and strength returned to him. Plunging into the house with unswerving accuracy, in spite of the darkness, he threaded his

way through the maze of rooms. By and by, he came to a door. He was gasping for breath; his heart was beating violently. He had striven to protect his face, yet through the blackened lips he had inhaled the flames. The hand of death was upon him. But the hand of life and love was clasped within his own. He opened the door.

IV

"By Jove!" said one of the men to the other, "what's that?"

"It looks like a house," returned his companion.

"It is a house," said their guide.

"It was once, you mean," said the first speaker; "it's about burned up now."

"There's a piece of it left standing yet, though," returned the guide.

"The rain came just in the nick of time," said the second man.

"It did indeed," said the other. "If the wind had not changed with the rain, the whole valley would have been swept as bare as that upper end of it."

"I wonder if anybody was there?"

"I guess there was," said the guide.

"Do you know anything about the place?"

"Well, there's a story that there was once a man, a painter, that was disapp'inted in love in some way or other, who came here an' built this house. He lived here alone, though of late years parties of

hunters an' trampers for pleasure used to come through this valley an' spend a night with him."

"I wonder if he escaped?"

"I guess so," answered the guide. "He lived long enough in these woods to know danger. He had plenty of warnin' of that fire."

"Did you say he was an artist?" asked the second man, who carried sketching materials in his hand.

"I guess that's what they said round here he was," returned the guide.

"Well, that accounts for it. I recall the story now. My father used to know him. He had a cottage over there in Greene Valley, years ago. He's got some pictures painted by that man now—at least I have; they were left to me—and splendid things they are, too. I remember he told me something of his life. The girl committed suicide and the man became a recluse."

"That's the man," said the guide, confidently.

"Did you ever see him?" asked the first man, shifting his gun as he spoke.

"Never seen him that I kin remember."

"Let us go over and see if he is there. Perhaps he may not have escaped after all," suggested the artist.

"All right. And there's a canoe," said the hunter, pointing along the shore to where a little boat had drifted.

The guide easily reached it, and in a few moments brought it down to the point of the lake where the two men, one making sketches and the other accom-

panying him gun in hand, had entered the desolated valley. The paddle was still in the canoe. The halfbreed had been a methodical man.

In a short time the little party of three had approached the upper end of the lake. They tied the canoe and clambered out on the little wharf.

"What's that?" cried one, pointing ahead.

There amid the half-burned trees lay a dead body. It was the halfbreed. He was lying prone on his face, his knees drawn up as if he had been crawling forward.

"By Jove!" said the hunter, "do you see how he is turned? He was crawling toward the house."

"Why not walking, I wonder," said the artist.

"See that leg?" said the guide. "He must have hurt himself."

"I'm going to the house," interrupted the artist, leaping up the slope.

Where the threshold had been, the others joined him. The house had been burned to ashes, except one long portion of it which, they noticed at the moment, had no windows. They made their way over the charred ruins toward it, and when they reached it they discovered that it, too, had been on fire. A portion of the side and of the roof nearest the approaching flames had gone, and the rain had flooded the first room.

That room was a bedroom. Although the rain had ruined it, the men saw that it had been beautifully furnished, yet with a simplicity not out of keeping with the wild mountains about it.

It was quite evident that it had been a woman's room, too. Nothing was lacking to it, then, but the woman. Yet, although no woman had ever been in it, and but one man, the air was redolent with the sense of a woman's presence. There was a stone fireplace at one end. The ashes of a fire lay within its depths. Though no one had ever lived there, it was evident that a fire had always burned upon the hearth.

The light in the room must have come from the windows in the roof. No eyes but his had ever been able to see in it. It had been as sacred from the curious gaze of man as the chamber of a vestal. He had kept it so for her. There was a door at the other end. The men reverently took off their hats and, treading softly over the thick rugs upon the floor, stepped through it into another larger room.

This room, like the first, was lighted from the roof. It was empty of any furniture. Completely filling the wall on one side to the right of them was a marvellous picture. One stood, as it were, upon the verge of the mountains. There were the peaks and the valleys, the silvery waters, the emerald of the pines. There was a sense of distance, of appalling, overwhelming elevation. The eye swam while it looked at it. It was the sublime transferred to the canvas by a master hand.

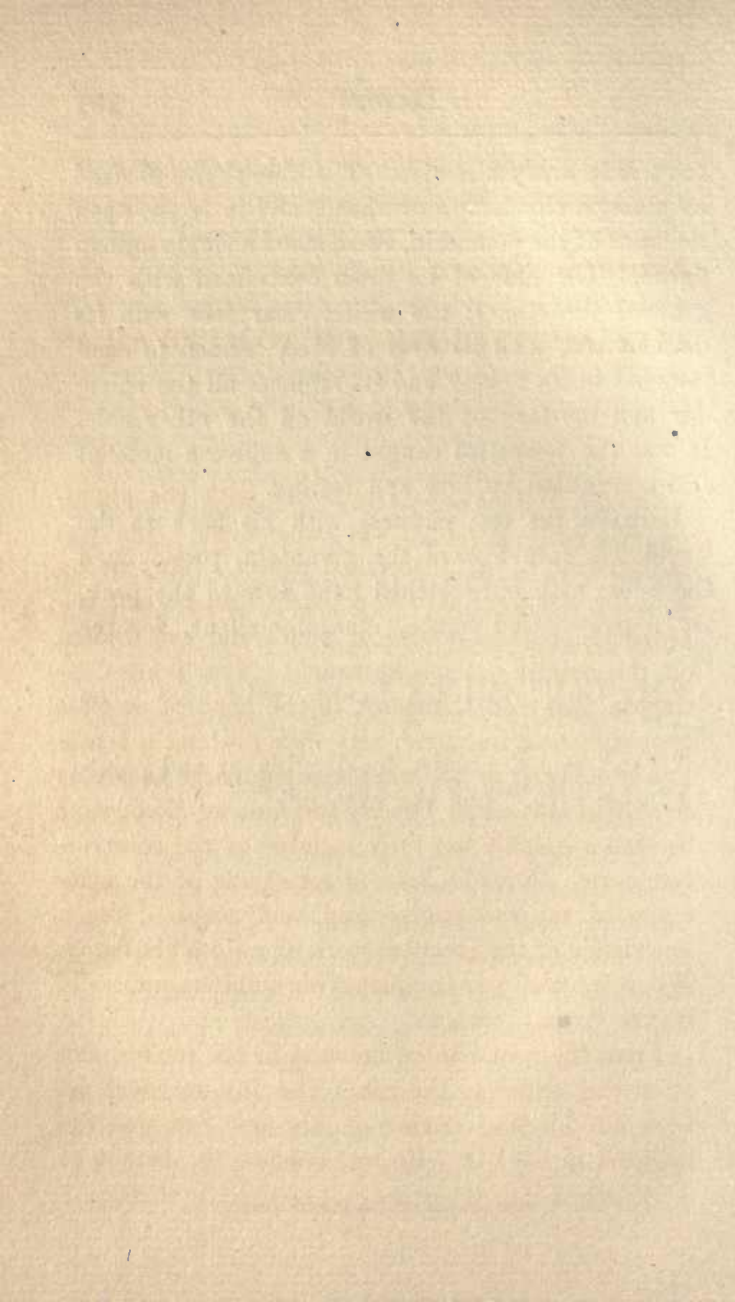
On the other wall opposite to it there rose another picture, a mountain-peak lifted in the air. They could feel, as they gazed, that the world fell away

from it in every direction. The blue sky, unflecked by a single cloud, rose overhead; and in front, upon the apex of the mountain, there stood a single human figure. The blue of its dress contrasted with the gray of the stones; the white, clear face with its dash of red, with its eyes of blue, seemed to comprehend in its beauty and its stillness all the splendor and mystery of the world on the other side. It was the Beautiful caught in a supreme moment and eternalized by love and feeling.

Between the two pictures with his back to the world, his face toward the mountain, prone upon the floor, with outstretched hand toward the peak, lay a gray-haired figure, eternally silent, forever still.

"My God!" said the hunter, pointing. "The man!"

"Yes," said the artist, looking higher and pointing in his turn, "and the woman."



Seventh Record

THE APOTHEOSIS OF WOODWARD *

I

George Woodward's familiarity with the practical side of railroading was exhaustive. Nor was he ignorant of its theoretical aspect. Thrown on his own resources at a very early age, he had followed the natural course of youth and had drifted on the empire track—westward! The Trans-Continental Railroad Company, in the hope of at least approximating its name, was then pushing a tentative iron feeler across what was popularly known as the Great American Desert, and George Woodward became a humble but busy member of the construction corps. Thus he learned something of the principles of railroad engineering, and acquired much knowledge of the practical work of railroad building. When the road was completed his ambition naturally was to “run” upon it.

From the round-house he went to the tender, and from the tender to the cab. The day on which he took out his first engine on his first run was the happiest in his life. He had reached the height of

* By courtesy of “The Cosmopolitan.”

his ambition, he thought. But ambitions change—God be thanked!—with passing years, and presently George Woodward did a strange thing. With a sigh of regret and a heart pang which only those may know who have held the throttle of a great locomotive, George, of his own motion, deserted the front end of the train and went backward—that is, he began braking on a freight! Everybody remonstrated with him, and many people called him a fool, but Woodward was wiser than his critics. Five years of arduous labor in various capacities finally earned him a position as conductor on a first-class passenger run.

The railroad company, with rare forethought, provided reading rooms for its employees. The superintendent of the reading rooms was a man of liberal education, deep culture, and what is not necessarily a concomitant of these, of sound common sense as well. His wisdom and experience were freely at Woodward's service. The books he needed the superintendent suggested and the company provided. The young railroad man had become aware of his educational deficiencies before it was too late, and in his rare leisure hours he became a close student of books. Men he also studied; women interested him but little, then. People who watched his progress, whose experience in life was not so deep as their observation had been extensive, used to say, as they marked his splendid development, that Woodward must have had good blood back of him somewhere; a most common but undemocratic state-

ment, as if the spirit of God in a man could not be independent of human ancestry on a pinch!

Everybody on the division realized that Woodward was in line for promotion. Vacancies occurred not infrequently on such a great system as the Trans-Continental, whose tracks stretched from the Mississippi to the Pacific seaboard. It was generally believed that Woodward would get the next one. For all his experience Woodward was still young. He had just turned twenty-eight and he could afford to wait. Although swift as well as accurate in his methods, he possessed an ample supply of that patience without which achievement cannot be. He was a good waiter, therefore, or rather he had been until the advent of Helen Blount on the system.

Miss Blount knew the system rather well herself; nor was her knowledge of railroading to be esteemed lightly. That knowledge, however, had not been acquired by hard work. She saw the Trans-Continental mainly through the plate glass windows, or from the observation platform of her father's private car. What she knew of it she learned from him, and certainly he was fully competent to instruct her. The experienced reader will at once surmise that her father was president of the road, and that to the inevitable development of stories of this kind it was necessary that Woodward should fall desperately in love with her. It would be a pity to shock the experienced reader by denying the conclusion. He, or she, is right, with this qualifica-

tion, that old General Blount was the fourth vice-president, the general manager only. The President sat in his elegantly appointed suite of offices, one room at a time, in Wall Street, and manipulated stocks and bonds. General Blount ran the road. It must be admitted that he ran it well.

The mountain division, which began on the edge of the desert, crossed the great divide and terminated on the edge of another desert, was the longest and hardest to run. The best men were concentrated on that division. There was always something happening to make things interesting. Although the country was as rainless during most of the year as a Sahara, at the most unexpected times clouds would gather and burst, and miles of track would be washed out. The rocky cliffs of the range had an inconvenient practice of disintegrating and dumping a train load of material on the track at the most inopportune periods. The private car of the general manager was more often seen on that division than any other. Naturally, the best conductor—that was Woodward—took the great Trans-Continental “Flyers” over that stretch of track with the private car trailing on behind.

For himself, old General Blount was intensely democratic. For his daughter, equally aristocratic. It was an annoyance to him that Helen insisted upon accompanying him wherever he went. But the old general had no one but his daughter and he generally acquiesced in her wishes—he had to! He used to talk freely with his employees, and he and the divi-

sion superintendent, a veteran and experienced rail-roader, would often invite Woodward back into the luxurious observation room for consultation and discussion. Thus the poor but honest and enterprising young man met the highly educated, also the beautiful and gracious, if somewhat condescending, daughter of the rich. She was a very different person from the women with whom Woodward had been ordinarily associated, worthy as they were, and she stimulated his ambition amazingly.

He desired a wider field, a more responsible position and greater authority, not merely for an opportunity to exercise those talents which he believed he possessed—and he was not wrong in his belief—but above all, because he saw her on his horizon. Indeed, she was his horizon. At first indifferent, then amused, then interested, and then, after he had taken advantage of a rare opportunity to let her see the real state of his feelings, astonished, somewhat outraged, then hesitant, then trembling on the verge—her experiences were quite as interesting as his.

Perhaps the thing that finally turned the wavering scale in her mind was the knowledge that General Blount would never permit such a thing. He was as friendly as possible with Woodward and men of his position; but then there was not the slightest possibility—so the old general might have reasoned—that Woodward or anybody else would desire to marry him. When it came to his daughter it was another thing entirely. He was as proud as Lucifer

and infinitely more exclusive. Indeed, so far removed from his idea was such a possibility that his very confidence begot a carelessness of which Woodward shrewdly took advantage.

Helen's will was as strong as her father's. She didn't like to be crossed any more than any other daughter of Eve. The general was a fighter, and although no one could have imagined it, his daughter shared his qualities. Besides, Woodward, in spite of certain gaucheries and roughnesses which were outward instead of inward, was really an admirable fellow. Being poor and honest, to make a satisfactory hero, it is inevitable that he should also be good-looking and strong. He was.

Also he loved Helen Blount with a passion, as he would have phrased it, "as hot as a new compound oil burner," the simile being furnished by a species of engine which pulled his train. He hadn't risen from nothing to engineer and then gone back to the bottom again deliberately, working himself up to his present position, without exhibiting a dogged determination which boded ill for any feminine resistant heart. He literally lived for the advent of the general manager's car, and insensibly Helen Blount found herself living for the advent of the young conductor.

Grown bolder with the progress of his love affair, Woodward had finally pleaded openly with her for her consent to his suit, but in vain. Although he was sure she loved him, she had withheld it. Naturally, therefore, he could not speak to her father.

Being an honorable young man, distinguished by the general's friendship, he chafed under the situation. There are seasons in which the wisest, the bravest, the most determined of men are helpless; and these are they which depend upon a young woman's "yes" or "no." Helen could not say "no" and she would not say "yes." Matters dragged along in this way until Woodward finally took the bull by the horns—meaning the general, not Helen.

For once Helen did not accompany her father over the division on this particular inspection trip. Woodward, therefore, found the general alone. He told him bluntly enough, for he was not a man of a great deal of finesse—that is the veneer of civilization which Woodward had not yet been able to acquire—that he loved his daughter, that he believed she loved him, and that he wished to marry her. Contrary to his expectation the old man did not explode. The audacity of the situation amused the general. What was the use of losing one's temper over the preposterous, the impossible?

"Have you spoken to Miss Blount?" he asked.

"I have, sir."

"Umph! What did she say?"

"She—well—"

"Did she consent to your suit?"

"Well, no sir, not exactly."

"Did she consent in any degree whatever?"

"I must admit that—"

"Then you have no evidence at all to back up this extraordinary statement that she—er—loves you?"

“Plenty, sir.”

“What is it?”

The evidence naturally being of an intangible and abstract character, it was difficult to put his meaning into words without giving offence. Woodward hesitated, opened his mouth two or three times, and ejaculated,

“Well, sir, I think—”

Then he stopped short, hopelessly silent.

“My boy,” said the general firmly but not unkindly, “you have been thinking too much. It’s dangerous, especially about women. I like you. I know all about your career and I have watched you carefully for several years. I am going to promote you, at least I intended to do so, at the first opportunity, but you must abandon further pretence to the hand of my daughter. I have other and higher views for her than—”

“I did not believe there was anything higher than the love of an honest man, sir.”

“I hope,” said the general sharply, at this trite remark, “that the fact that I have ambitions for my daughter’s future which do not include you does not necessarily involve her marriage with a scoundrel, sir!”

“Of course not, sir, but—”

“I shall speak plainly, Woodward. You are an enterprising ambitious young man, who has accomplished much and will accomplish much more, provided you keep your head and behave yourself, but you are not in any way, shape, or form, my daugh-

ter's equal, and—well, the long and the short of the whole thing is, I won't have it!"

"But, sir," burst forth Woodward impetuously, his dark face flushing, "one might urge from what I have made of myself, out of nothing, that I shall some day even rise"—it was a rash thing to say, but the young man was thoroughly angered—"to the responsible position of general manager of the Trans-Continental."

"What!" roared General Blount.

"You said yourself just now," continued Woodward resolutely, "that I was marked for promotion."

"I did," interrupted the other man, "but I shall not promote you unless I am thoroughly satisfied with your conduct. Do you understand?"

"Which means to say that I must either give up my hope of promotion or of—Miss Blount."

"By gad, sir!" ejaculated the general manager, "you have no hope of Miss Blount, sir! And but little of promotion."

"Pardon me," said Woodward quietly, "I shall never give up hope of either."

"It happens," said the general, "that I control both Miss Blount and the promotion."

"You certainly control the promotion, but as to Miss Blount—I have my doubts."

"Your doubts and your thoughts are interesting but they are too much for me. I do not believe that you can work for the Trans-Continental any longer. Sit down at the desk there and write out your resig-

nation, sir! I will have a time check made out for you immediately."

"Not work for the Trans-Continental!" gasped Woodward. "Why, I began with the road! You can't mean it! I have never worked for anything else. I know the road as well as you do, and I love it better! You can't mean to discharge me!"

"I do mean just that, unless you give me your word here and now that you will give up this foolish and ridiculous pretension to my daughter's hand."

"I wouldn't give that up for the whole system!"

"Very good. You lose both. There is the table."

"Look here, sir," said Woodward stoutly, "you are the general manager of this railroad and I am only a conductor, but I am a man and I believe you to be one. We boys out on the division have been proud of you and of your record as a railroad man and your older record as a soldier. I don't think any of them would be proud of you if you act this way. What would you think of me, of any man, who had an ounce of ambition, or who loved a woman as I love your daughter—there is no insult to her in loving her, is there?—if I allowed you to bluff me in this way and would say I'd give up my hopes of the young lady—and God knows they are few enough!—for the sake of a job? What would you think of me?"

"I'd think you were an infernal cad, sir," admitted the old general, somewhat impressed by this presentation of the case. "Well, sir, I'll reconsider my decision in part, though I don't often do it.

You need not leave the road. I will send you over to the valley division. But mark me, sir! I'm not going to take a step to bring you any nearer to a promotion, not a step to aid you to accomplish your preposterous ambitions."

"Excuse me, General," said Woodward, "if I don't believe you."

"What do you mean, sir?"

"I don't believe you're the kind of a man that would turn a deserving man down and withhold a promotion which had been earned because that man had ambitions that you thought were preposterous. The valley division is nothing compared with this. Railroading there is as peaceful and quiet as floating down stream in a scow, but I'll do my best there too. And I assure you I'll never give up my ambitions as long as I live."

The train was pulling into the station just then and his duties gave Woodward an opportunity to retreat with some of the honors of war, at least. The old general looked at him not without certain admiration. Rarely had he been so braved by one of his employees and in his own private car, and he rather enjoyed it, or would, if it had not been for Helen.

"Gad!" he said to himself, "if that boy had more education and better opportunities I should be afraid for the girl."

II

Thereafter, until Woodward was changed to the valley division, Miss Helen Blount did not accompany her father on his inspection tours. She wondered, until Woodward found means to convey to her the substance of the interview. The old general did not mention it. There was something ominous in his mind in the statement which the conductor had made to him that he thought Helen was not indifferent to him. The general was afraid to pursue any investigations in that direction. He feared what he might find out. He was not without a shrewd suspicion that his daughter's spirit matched his own, and, like a prudent soldier, he did not want an unnecessary clashing.

Being a wise man, he trusted that absence, other scenes and companions might obliterate impressions which he hoped were faint. Some women would have forgotten, most men would have done so. These were a different pair. Woodward's determination increased with every day and his passion kept pace. Helen admitted to herself that she loved him, and once that admission was made every mental objection was swept away. There are elements which are harmless and innocent when kept to themselves but which immediately explode upon contact. These two needed but to touch each other to produce an explosion which would blow the general's house of cards about his ears irreparably.

That touch came. A year after the scene in the car, Helen, who had just returned from a foreign tour, on which she had been despatched ostensibly to improve her mind, really to purge her heart, insisted upon accompanying her father once more over the line, and the general in a weak moment allowed it. The valley division struck off at right angles to the main line at the beginning of the mountain division. Woodward got off the "plug passenger" to which he was assigned, one evening, and his heart almost ceased its beating as his glance fell upon the general's private car. Not that the private car itself was a thing to excite a lover, but the shades of the windows were not yet drawn and in the brilliantly lighted little drawing-room he saw Helen Blount. The division superintendent came out of the despatcher's office at the same moment and caught sight of Woodward. Coming rapidly toward him, he remarked: "You're just the man I want. Are you too tired to take out No. 5?"

"Too tired!" The young man's heart leaped in his bosom at the chance. He had just come in from his run and ordinarily would have refused, but here was an opportunity he had never hoped for. "Certainly not!" he exclaimed; "I will take her out gladly. What's the matter?"

"Sylvester's ill and I have no one to send but you. Go in and get your orders. She's been here twenty-five minutes already"—he hauled out his watch—"she's due to leave now."

Woodward turned and ran into the despatcher's

office. The division superintendent walked down the track toward the general manager's car. The general met him at the door.

"Who's taking the train out?" he asked.

He knew that Sylvester, the regular conductor, had been taken suddenly ill and that they were rather short of trainmen at the division from various causes.

"Woodward," answered the division superintendent, innocently; "he has just come in off his own run and gladly acceded to my request that he take you over the mountain division. He used to run on the division, you know."

Neither the division superintendent nor any one except the parties immediately concerned knew why Woodward had been transferred.

"Umph!" said the general, "yes, I know. On second thoughts, Smithson, I think you can detach my car and let No. 7 take it over. There's less than an hour's difference between the two trains anyway, and it will give me a little more time here."

It happened that No. 7, the other Trans-Continental west-bound train, followed No. 5 across the continent at an interval of about half an hour. The arrival of the west-bound passengers at the eastern terminus rendered it necessary to run these two trains in that way instead of having one a morning and the other an evening train.

Helen had been standing by her father when Smithson entered the car, and the general felt the start she gave at the mention of Woodward's name. He was determined that these two should not meet.

Under the circumstances there was nothing else for the general to do, when he heard that Woodward was to take the train out, but to delay his car for No. 7. He could not in decency object to Woodward's taking the train over the division, but he could detach his car. He would have stopped over a day at Diamond Points, the division terminus, had it not been imperative for him to reach San Francisco as soon as possible. He did the next best thing.

As Woodward came out of the despatcher's office with his orders he saw the yard engine backing up to the rear of his train. He ran down there, but there was nothing that he could do. The general nodded and smiled satirically at him from the platform. Resolutely thrusting herself past her father's portly form until she could see the rear end of the train from which the car had been drawn, Helen also nodded and smiled—not satirically—at him. After a year's separation, even a nod and a smile counted for much. Greatly disappointed at the cutting off of the car, but cheered nevertheless by the glimpse he had caught of the woman he loved, Woodward gave the signal for No. 5 to pull out.

The train was a double-header. Going west, there were some very heavy grades to be overcome, to which even the big oil-burning compounds of the division, the finest passenger engines in the world, were unequal. The train was a heavy one, but most of its occupants were through passengers, there being little local traffic on the division, and having once gone through the long line of cars, there was little

to distract the mind of the conductor from the running of his train.

In that and in the knowledge that Helen Blount was coming along rapidly behind him on No. 7 he found ample food for reflection. The first hundred miles of the journey passed without mishap. At Himalaya, a little water station on the top of the mountain, he got orders to run to Delhi siding and there side-track for No. 2, the east-bound Limited. Delhi siding was on the other side of the mountain, about twenty-five miles away. A hot box had made him ten minutes late, but still he had sixty-two minutes to make the siding. It would take all of that on account of the grades.

Sometimes when work was light or when the emergency was critical, Woodward rode on the engine. The track from Himalaya to Delhi was the crookedest, the most difficult and dangerous stretch on the system. As he handed the engineer his orders he swung himself into the cab of the forward locomotive. The fireman offered to give him his seat, but Woodward motioned him to stay where he was, it being a rather nice job so to manipulate the oil valves as to keep the fire going in the proper way. Both engines were oil-burners of the most improved type. Woodward stood in the narrow space between the tender and the engine peering out ahead from time to time into the pitch darkness illuminated for a long distance by the splendid electric headlight—a miniature searchlight, in fact.

The run was made without incident of any sort,

save that they rather lost time on account of an unusually heavy train. They crossed the divide about twelve miles from the siding at Delhi and in order to get there in time the engineers opened up and the train raced down the mountain, taking the curves at a prodigious speed. The head engineer and fireman and Woodward intently watched the track before the train. Coming around the curve which hid the track ahead of them Woodward, who was leaning far out, thought he detected a faint grayness over the top of the mountain on a shoulder of which the road ran. He swung back into the cab, touched the engineer and pointed. The man nodded, instantly shut off the steam and shoved up the reversing lever. He had not completed these movements, rapid as they were, before a bright blaze of light shot into view upon the track a few feet directly in front of them.

It was No. 2, the Limited they had been ordered to pass at Delhi siding five miles away! There was some frightful mistake for she was turning the curve and coming down upon them at a speed which almost matched their own. Woodward had stepped back between the cab and the tender. He dropped down instantly to the step and held on for a second while the engineer put on the air. Woodward knew the place like a book. The road bed was cut out of the mountain close to its base. For ten feet the slope to the level ground was covered with broken rock. To stay on the engine was death. To jump on the broken rock was death also. Woodward had about

a second to decide what he must do. One glance he shot at the roaring monster hurling itself upon them in a blaze of electric light. Then he jumped.

The woman who hesitates is said to be lost but why the problem should be confined to the feminine gender is not obvious. Either possibility of the situation was enough for an ordinary man, but that moment of hesitation subjected Woodward to the perils of both of them, for he not only fell on the rocks but as he struck he was in the midst of the collision as well.

The terrific force of the impact demolished the engine of the Limited and the first engine of No. 5. The tender of the other engine which was also smashed into an unrecognizable mass of old iron was hurled upon him where he lay at the foot of the declivity. The Limited contained nothing but Pullman cars, consequently No. 5 got the worst of the collision.

The baggage, mail, smoking car and two coaches were shivered into splinters. Even the first two or three of the Pullmans on the rear end were badly damaged. Woodward was not conscious of this or of any of the heartrending scenes which followed, for the oil from the shattered locomotives speedily ignited the wreckage and the helpless passengers pinned under the wreck were involved in a terrible conflagration.

As the conductor leaped he heard the roar of the collision and the broken tender of the second engine fell over upon him. The blaze of light which had

been about him as he jumped was succeeded by intense darkness and he knew nothing more. How long it continued he could not tell. Indeed, he did not speculate upon it, for his first thought, when consciousness returned, was his duty. Strange to say, he felt no especial pain. He found by cautious experiment that he could move one leg and one arm. The others appeared to be held down by something, what it was he could not at first divine. He felt about vaguely in the darkness with both free members, and discovered at last that he was lying not upon the rocks but upon something soft and sticky. He reasoned slowly but with increasing clearness. He had evidently jumped clear of the embankment, and something—he recognized what it was presently—had fallen upon him. Light came to him as his mind cleared, from the blazing cars upon the track above him. Not enough to enable him to see, however, but enough to permit him to realize.

He was the conductor of that train. It was his train and he ought to be there; then flashed into his mind the fact that No. 7 was following close on his heels—was only thirty minutes behind him! The wreck had occurred just at the apex of the curve. It could not be seen from the other side by the approaching train, unless the light from the blazing cars might give warning, which from the topography was so unlikely as to be almost unthinkable. It was too faint a possibility to be depended upon. He wondered if the rear brakeman had been hurt, and, if not if he had done his duty in flagging that train. While

these thoughts passed through his mind he was making efforts to free himself. The softness of the ground about him he discovered to be due to water from the broken tank, which had flooded the spot where he lay. Groping about he found a passage to freedom, and by a superhuman effort he at last hauled himself clear of the weights pinning him down, and dragged himself from under the remains of the tender.

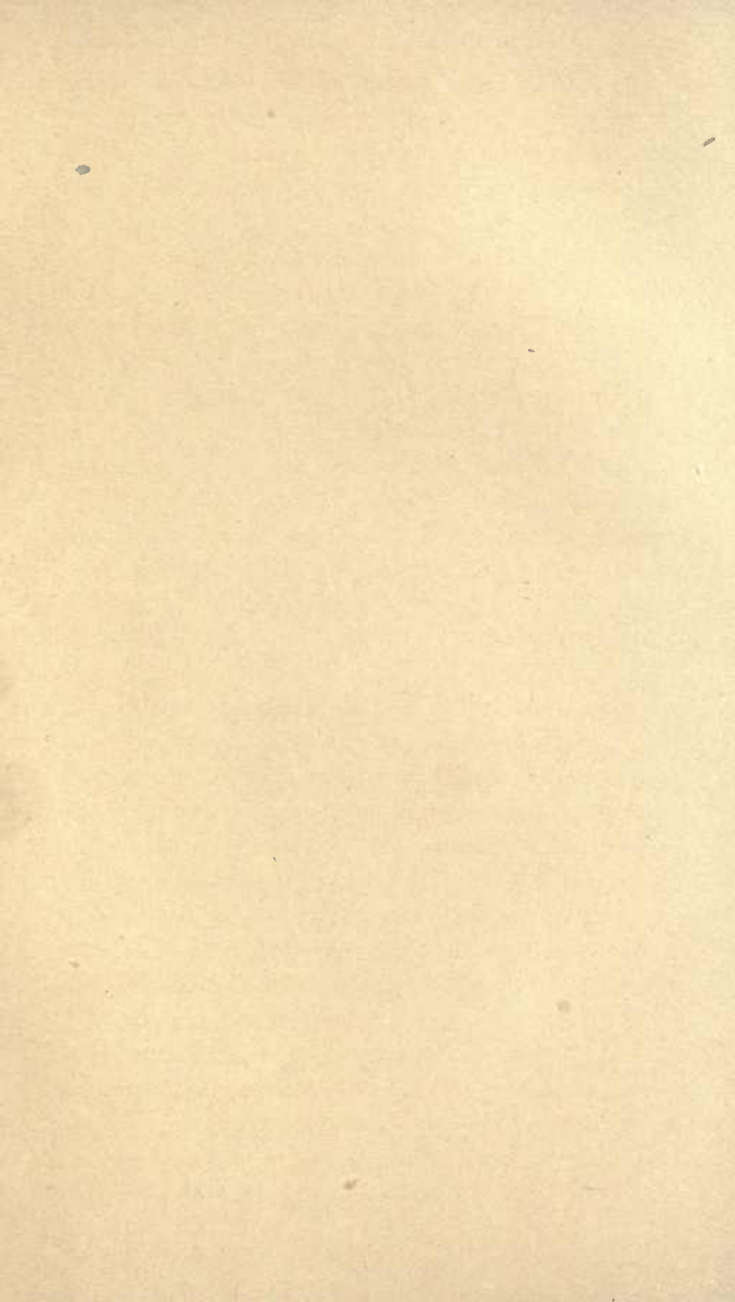
He realized then that he was frightfully burned from his waist down. His clothing was in rags. His face had been swept by fire but his arm providentially had fallen across his mouth, and he had not inhaled the flame. Indeed, he would have been burned to death had not the rush of water dashed the oil—fortunately the oil tank had been almost empty—and fire away from him. As he writhed along the ground toward the blazing wreck, he realized that Helen Blount was in No. 7!

How he did it neither he nor any one else ever knew. He crawled up the bank, finding as he did so that one of his arms was broken, staggered to his feet, and started down the track in the direction whence his train had come. Under other circumstances he could not have walked a step—but for her he could do the impossible.

As he passed the rear Pullman he took one of the lanterns from it in default of any other signal. He rounded the curve and staggered on to the entrance of the cañon through which the track swept a few rods before the curve was reached. There was no



He had just strength enough
to lift the lantern.—Page 153



sign of the brakeman. For some reason he had failed to go back and warn the train. Woodward must go on.

He was in great pain now, suffering horribly. His chest felt as if he had been beaten to a pulp with a hammer. His broken arm dangled uselessly by his side. Blood trickled into his mouth from where he could not tell and nearly choked him. The pain in his legs and body caused by his burns was something frightful. Will alone kept him up. Love alone gave him strength. To stop would be to die. He kept resolutely on. It seemed to him that it took him hours to take a step. Really he ran frantically up the track. It was well that he did so. He had lain insensible for nearly half an hour. There was no time to be lost. Just as he plunged into the mouth of the cañon he heard the roar of No. 7's locomotives. Thank God, he was in time! He had just strength enough to lift the lantern, wave it several times and then fall back to the track.

The engineers of No. 7 acted promptly. They brought their great train to a sudden standstill, with the pilot of the leader just touching the prostrate figure of Woodward. It was about ten o'clock at night. Most of the passengers were asleep. But General Blount and his daughter happened to be awake. The general, as he felt the air put on, realized that something was wrong. Bidding Helen wait for him, he ran to the door of the car, scrambled down to the track, and hastened toward the head of the train. Helen did not wait. She followed her father and joined the

little group of engineers, firemen and trainmen just in front of the engine ahead.

"What's the matter?" panted the general, coming up out of the darkness into the bright illumination of the electric headlight.

"The train's been flagged, sir," said Digby, the conductor, "something has happened evidently."

"Who is this?" exclaimed General Blount, stepping toward a group, which gave way to him.

"It's one of the negro porters, I think. He's badly hurt, and ——" answered an engineer, who was kneeling by the side of the stricken man, and just then Helen appeared on the scene.

"What is it, father? Has there been—oh, what is that?"

She looked down on the senseless figure of a man, his clothing torn to shreds, his body frightfully burned, his face black with mud and soot; a horrible picture, indeed. But 'tis hard to deceive a woman's eye, especially when the vision is sharpened by affection.

"It's Mr. Woodward!" exclaimed the girl. "My God! Is he dead?"

"No, ma'am, not yet," said the engineer, giving way to her as she dropped to the ground and took the man's head in her arms. She did not lose her presence of mind yet—there would be time for that later.

"Water, some one," she cried, "and whiskey!"

Both were forthcoming, the water from the tender, the whiskey from the general's pocket-flask.

Between the two, assisted it may be by some con-

sciousness of the overwhelming affection of the woman, whose every restraint gave way at the side of her lover dying, perhaps dead, in her arms, Woodward opened his eyes.

"No. 2 and 5 are in the—ditch—on the—curve," he whispered, not recognizing anybody in the blaze of light. "My orders," he continued, endeavoring to raise his hand. He would fain justify himself before he died, he felt.

With quick intuition the trainmen realized what he meant by those words. The conductor knelt down, thrust his hand into Woodward's coat, and pulled out his last train order.

"Read," said the prostrate man.

"No. 5 will take siding at Delhi siding until No. 2 passes," read Digby.

"I obeyed orders," said Woodward, in weak triumph. "They need help—yonder," he gasped out and then fainted away.

By this time the right of way was swarming with excited passengers.

"There has been a wreck; they need help," said the general promptly. "Everybody go forward."

He himself set the example by leading the way. This time Helen did not follow. She had more pressing business close at hand. Assisted by the two firemen, an improvised stretcher was rigged, and presently Woodward awoke to consciousness in Helen's own dainty bed in the private car. There happened to be two physicians, passengers on the train, and one of them Helen had detained to assist

Woodward. But that young man would not hear of any attention being paid to him.

"There are people yonder," he gasped, "burning to death. Go to them, for God's sake! You can do nothing for me."

There was really nothing much more that any one could do for him then, and the physician, appreciating the situation, after bandaging him hurriedly, left him to Helen. She did all she could. She loosened his clothing, removed his shoes, bathed his face and administered the stimulants that the doctor had left with her. She knew now beyond all doubting that she loved him. She had known it all the time, but had admitted it almost against her will. Now everything was swept away in the knowledge that perhaps it was too late. She hung over him with all her heart and soul in her glance. She would have given life itself for his then, yet there was nothing she could do. That sense of impotent helplessness which adds the last poignancy to anguish when we contemplate the sufferings of those we love, was hers. The nervous shock which had afforded a certain amount of relief to Woodward was gone, and he lay in agony inexpressible. But because he was a man and a gentleman and a lover, he strove as best he could to control himself for her sake more than his own.

"Oh," she said at last, "if I could only do something to help you!"

"You can," he whispered, heroically. "Smile at me, Helen—when you see me suffering the hardest—and I'll smile back—as long as I can."

Poor Woodward. When the general returned from the wreck with the mangled remains of those who yet lived he found Woodward insensible, and Helen sitting dry-eyed, white-faced, broken-hearted by his side.

The story of the run of No. 7 with its awful cargo of sufferers back to the division headquarters at Levinson was one that was often told. Many died on the way to succor, but Woodward had a tenacious hold upon life, and the breath was still in him when they took him to the hospital.

The general was soldier enough to know when he was beaten. One look at Helen's face, when she said, "Father, I love him," in answer to his inquiring glance, convinced him that the game was up, and nothing would prevent the marriage to which he was so genuinely opposed, except the death of Woodward.

No one could have wished that. The division, indeed the whole country, so soon as the story was told, rang with his heroism. There was something magnificently dramatic in the running of that broken, burned figure, wounded almost to death, in the picture of that body collapsing on the track, the lantern still in his hand in front of No. 7, which appealed to every heart. For Woodward's action had undoubtedly saved No. 7 from plunging into the wreck of the other two trains, in which case there would have been a much greater catastrophe.

And there were hints of romance, too. Those western railroad men were keen. They knew a "hawk

from a handsaw," and that Helen Blount loved the heroic conductor was plain to every one when she had gathered him in her arms in front of the pilot on that eventful night. Everybody wondered what the old general would do. The old general rose to the occasion. Woodward had been unconscious or delirious for a long time, but so soon as he recovered sufficiently to understand what was going on about him, the general and his daughter came to see him. The girl insisted on seeing her lover first and alone.

Woodward's first question had been for the safety of No. 7 and the woman he loved. The nurses had given him ample assurance upon both points. If he had needed any more, the presence of Helen Blount was enough. She had been warned and, indeed, she realized from her faithful attendance upon her gallant lover while he had been unconscious in the hospital, that he must not be excited. She wanted to let him know her feelings, however, and when she knelt down beside his cot in the private room, that he might more easily see her, or that she might get nearer to him, she bent her lips to his thin, scarred hand lying on the cover.

"Is that the best you can do?" he whispered.

Then she kissed him upon the lips.

"Does that mean——"

"It means anything you wish—if you will only live and get well—for me," she said, and then her father entered the door. He sighed deeply as Helen rose to her feet in some confusion. But he was a good loser after all.

“Woodward,” he said, “you must get well now. I have just made you superintendent of the mountain division, vice Smithson transferred. Will you take the position?”

“Does the lady go with the job?” asked the sick man.

The general looked at Helen and Helen looked at the general.

“Yes, I go,” said the girl softly.

“Yes, she goes,” echoed the general, reluctantly, it must be admitted.

“I accept,” said Woodward, smiling up at the pair.

Eighth Record

THE REPARATION *

Miss Abigail and Miss Philippa were the last of the Herondines. To be a Herondine in Virginia meant much, to be the last of the family meant more. Miss Abby was fully conscious of her position, Miss Philippa cared little about it. Miss Abby's ambition was to live up to what she fondly believed were the traditions of her forebears. Miss Philippa's desire was to get the most she could out of the present moment with no backward thoughts for the past and with little concern for the future. Miss Abby was all dignity, poise and pride. Miss Philippa was laughter, gaiety itself.

Two beings could not be more dissimilar, yet they were as intimately bound together as sunshine and shadow. Unconsciously Miss Philippa summed up her ancestry better than Miss Abby, despite her efforts, for the Herondines had been chief among the fox-hunting, pleasure-loving, easy-going squires of the Old Dominion. To be appropriate the family arms should have sported the mask of comedy and the family motto should have been a jest.

The first American Herondine had been a cavalier. After the restoration of King Charles he had come

* By courtesy of "The Associated Sunday Magazines "

to Virginia, having previously taken to wife a daughter of one of the sternest and most rigorous of the followers of the Great Protector. The lover, like love, will go where he is sent; and dashing George Herondine, to the great astonishment of all who knew him, had been sent, in some mysterious way, straight into the arms of Mistress Abigail Prynford—a rollicking blade in a Puritan heart!

The first lady of Heronshaw Hall had a difficult task to preserve her dignity and adhere to her principles in the society of the bluff, roystering, gallant Herondine she had married. That she had done so attested the strength of her character and her devotion to her creed. She controlled herself, but there she stopped perforce. Nature is freakish. The little Herondines that came in regular succession to the strangely mated couple at Heronshaw partook of the character of the weaker vessel rather than of the stronger. They were all Herondines from the bone out.

Two hundred years' incumbency by such a family would waste a principality. When George Herondine, the seventh, died in the fifties, the last male of his race, his patrimony was gone. He left to his two daughters, sole issue of his marriage, little but the family home, the ground on which it stood, a few black servants, and the recollection of the past glories of his house to live up to.

In all the long line of descendants of the first George and his Puritan wife there was but one who in any way partook of the characteristics of the pro-

genitress of the family. No one who knew the two young women, thus left to themselves untimely, could understand Miss Abigail Herondine. The memory of the Puritan had been naturally lost save for antiquarians who delighted to delve in family histories, and Miss Abigail, therefore, remained a family mystery, a social enigma, an atavistic anachronism in her present. She had even connected herself with the Presbyterians—the first Herondine out of “The Church” in two hundred years!

Not only was there a disparity in temperament between the two women, but there was a great difference in age as well. Miss Abby was fifteen when Miss Philippa was born. At the time of this story Miss Philippa was twenty and Miss Abby thirty-five. Miss Abby was tall, largely built, and, had there been any gentleman ungallant enough in the Old Dominion so to characterize a lady, she might have been described truthfully enough, as gaunt, not to say rawboned. For the rest, few could mistake her character, none her breeding.

Miss Philippa—well, Miss Philippa was delicious. Miss Abby's dark hair was as straight as an Indian's. Miss Philippa's golden locks curled as naturally as a tendril does. Miss Abby was grim, severe, unapproachable as well as unexceptionable. The few servants left at Heronshaw stood in deadly awe of her. Miss Philippa they adored. Her old mammy fairly worshipped her. It was not known whether Miss Abby had an old mammy or not. But Miss Abby was yet a very woman, and she loved Miss

Philippa with a passionate devotion, the greater because her mental habit was one of repression, which did not allow her to manifest that love as a more sympathetic and open nature might have done.

Miss Philippa's frivolity was a constant source of grief to her older sister; and Miss Abby's rigid ideas of duty—a much greater word in her vocabulary than love!—compelled her to make this disapproval known; information that Philippa met with kisses and entwining clasps and merry laughs. There was room for but two passions in the older woman's breast—love for Philippa and for the doing of duty all the time. At least so Miss Abigail thought until the advent of David Graham.

David was twenty-five years old. He told Miss Abby that he was thirty-one. He was the son of a distant connection of the family, with excellent manners, a handsome person, and a manly bearing, set off by education, expensive and adequate. His morals—well, his statement to Miss Abby about his age is an indication as to what they were. Not that he was vicious or depraved. Quite the contrary. With a capacity for sudden splendid action on rare occasions, he was yet hopelessly weak. When to his weakness was added a faculty for engaging the affections of women, which often goes with such a character, no more dangerous person could have been introduced into the placid Eden in which Miss Philippa dwelt with her sister of the flaming sword of conscience, vainly angeling at the outer gate.

Men as well as women were susceptible to the

charm of David Graham's plausible personality. For instance, the young man secured money easily—best test of his attractiveness—and spent it more easily. He had gone through his own patrimony. He had borrowed from all his friends. Wherever he sojourned he left a lot of debts besides a breaking heart or two. He had fled from creditors many, and women not a few, to hide himself for a time among the mountains of the sequestered valley in which Heronshaw stood loftily dominant—in memory at least—of the surrounding country. He had vaguely recalled his feminine connections when he pitched upon that place of rustication, and when he reached the Hall the situation appealed to him directly.

For him to see a woman was to make love to her. He had a passion for the sex. Here were two representatives. He made love to Miss Abby openly, to Miss Philippa quietly, deftly keeping each in ignorance of the other. He would amuse himself with both. It flattered his pride to be able to do this. By and by he fell really in love with Miss Philippa, so far as it was in him to love any one. But he did not neglect Miss Abby on that account.

The passion for duty and the passion for Miss Philippa had to make a place in Miss Abby's flinty breast for a passion for David, again a feeling not the less intense because she gave little outward evidence of it. And to do him justice Graham hardly realized to what degree his trifling had warmed that glacial heart. He had so lightly given her so little from his point of view, that he did not dream how

much it meant to her, whose habit and whose misfortune it was to give little outward expression yet to feel deeply. He thought too much about Miss Philippa to think greatly about Miss Abby. It was David's misfortune ever to imagine himself hopelessly in love with the present object of his vagrom attention. He lived in successive states of ecstatic emotion. He was ready to go to the last limit in any of his ephemeral passions, while they lasted.

One morning Miss Abby, leaving her room for the day's duties, was handed a note by old black Asa, the major-domo of the diminished household. The ancient butler stated to his mistress that he had been ordered by Miss Philippa to give it to her when she awakened. Such an occurrence was unusual. Miss Abby questioned the butler further.

"When did Miss Philippa give it to you, Asa?"

"Late las' night, Miss Abby, aftuh you was in baid, ma'am."

With deep foreboding, Miss Abby turned away from the old man, went into the library and opened her letter. Philippa and David Graham had run away! They were going to Richmond where they would be married, then to New York, and so for a time out of Miss Abby's life. "David," wrote Philippa, "begs your forgiveness. He knew that you would never consent to my marrying him, and he pretended to make love to you in order that you might not notice us. He knows, of course, that you saw through his trifling and that you did not care."

"Thank God!" was Miss Abby's first thought,

“that I never betrayed what I felt for him. That he does not know——”

Miss Abby did not phrase it further, but she might have completed the sentence thus: That he did not know her heart was broken, her soul crushed, more by the fact that he had used her to cover another love affair, by the consciousness that her love had been given him honestly in answer to his play, than by the defection of Philippa.

There was nothing that Miss Abby could do except suffer in silence. There was no comfort to be found for a wound like this, but she had the courage to make no moan nor outbreak. She wove again the threads of her daily life, but this time alone. There was naught but shadow at Heronshaw, sunshine was gone from it and for Miss Abby as well.

Nor did sunshine return when Miss Philippa came back. She had gone away in the springtime; it had come again, a second summer had passed, and it was winter once more. One night it stormed. Miss Abby sat alone in the library, her Bible in her lap, open but neglected, typical of Miss Abby's condition. She was dreaming as even the sternest—thank God!—may sometimes dream. Into her iron soul was borne the consciousness of a footstep upon the gallery outside. She listened. A hand fumbled at the slats of the shutters that covered the long French windows. Miss Abby rose and lifted the lamp. The light showed her a woman's face, ghastly white behind the leveled slats, as of a prisoner without hope staring through bars.

Another woman might have screamed and dropped the lamp, for it was death apparently that confronted her. Miss Abby put the lamp quietly down upon the table, stepped to the window, opened it, pushed back the shutters and picked up the form that lay huddled on the porch and carried it into the house

That night Philippa's baby was born. That night the little soul went out on the storm that had brought its mother there. And the mind of Philippa went out in the darkness with the soul of her child. When the long illness was over, Philippa was as a child herself. The past was wiped out of her recollection. There had been a clean—was it merciful?—erasure. There was nothing in the present. She babbled and smiled and spoke an infinite deal of nothing with not even the two-grain reasons of Gratiano in her chaff. Outwardly she grew prettier than ever, mentally she was nothing.

There were two shadows in the house instead of one thereafter. But one comfort had Miss Abby, and that was in the paper that she found next to Miss Philippa's heart—a marriage certificate. Thank God, he had been man enough for that. Miss Abby knew the whole story. After the baby was born, untimely, on that bitter night she had pierced it out from Miss Philippa's ravings in the delirium of the supervening fever; a story as old as the hills, as oft repeated as wave succeeds to wave on the sea of circumstance, but coming as an unique experience, with a new bitterness, in every instance. Infatuation,

possession, satiety, indifference, hatred, desertion! And a woman's expiation.

There were whispers which grew and grew until they were cried upon the housetops; there were inquiries covert and open; there were suspicions which assumed the force of certainty among the people round about, but no one questioned Miss Abby. She devoted herself to the care of Miss Philippa as if the woman who had been wife and mother were indeed a child. Vainly she sought to develop again the lingering remains of Miss Philippa's intellect. Over and over with a patience that was painful to think on she taught Miss Philippa her letters, for instance. No more sternness, no more reprovings, no more warnings, came from Miss Abby. A keen observer might have said that after a time the house again contained sunshine and shadow, this time Miss Abby was the sunshine—a fierce blaze kindled by anger, fed by desire, yet ever gentle to Miss Philippa, quite unconscious of it all.

Miss Abby still lived for two things, for Miss Philippa, as she had always lived for her, and for revenge upon David Graham. Miss Philippa gave her little mental occupation; she was not so great a stimulus to her mind as an intelligent dog might have been, so that Miss Abby practically lived alone, with a desire for some requital upon the man who had ruined the lives of the two women.

In her way—and it was a more dangerous way—Miss Abby was as mad as Miss Philippa. She pondered over the pages of the Old Testament just as

the ironside cavalry had been wont to do two hundred and fifty years before. Every denunciatory clause found an echo in her heart. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, evil for evil, blow for blow—so her gospel was written. She prayed day after day for its consummation. A desire to compass it was her obsession. The more powerful, the more intense, the more tremendous, was this feeling because she gave no outward sign of it. She only waited. She stayed quietly at home with Philippa, whose every mindless laugh pricked on her resolution.

Then civil war burst over the land. No spot in the country was more fought over than the fertile valley in which Heronshaw stood. The quiet strip of country became the granary of armies. Miss Abby's patriotism was unbounded. She discovered that she loved Virginia with a force that she had not realized until the demand was made upon her. Battles raged about her house. Armies marched in front of her door. Wounded and ill craved her attention. She did not refuse succor to the men in blue, but her heart went out to the stricken men in gray. The Union troops respected her, and the Confederate soldiers adored her. So she lived on unmolested by either side, impartially ministering to everyone in trouble, yet with her heart fixed in its allegiance to the flag that was barred rather than to that which was striped.

Summer in 1864. The men in gray had been fought to a standstill. The end was evident to officers and men. Weaker souls desert the losing battle.

With stern determination the braver hearts strove in vain to check the abandonment of the cause by those who lacked the fortitude that sustains defeat. The way of a deserter, if he were caught, was hard.

Miss Abby was standing on the high pillared porch scanning the white road before her. Suddenly through the hedge upon the other side of the road a figure crawled. Her eye was attracted to it. A man rose cautiously to his feet, stared up and down the road, then darted across it and plunged into the neglected undergrowth bordering what remained of Heronshaw. Again he waited, watchful. Finding himself unobserved, he slunk through the grass under the trees, and stopped before the Hall. He had been wounded; there was a long scar across his face, and his cheek was caked with dried blood. He was a handsome man, whose face and mouth were hidden by a mustache and beard. He wore a sergeant's chevrons upon his sleeve.

"For God's sake, Miss——" He stopped. "Ma'am, won't you please help me?" he went on entreatingly.

Miss Abby knew him at once, in spite of his beard and the change that years of hard living, and hard campaigning perhaps, had wrought in him. She schooled herself into absolute immobility. He had intended to make himself known to her, but after his first glance at her he came to the conclusion that she had not recognized him, and he decided that he would remain unknown as the better part of discretion.

"I am always ready to help any loyal soldier who wears that uniform," said Miss Abby calmly.

There was a sudden patter of hoofs far down the road. The man and woman both heard it at the same time.

"My God!" he said, "they are after me!"

"Are they Federal troops?"

"No," answered the man, reluctantly, "our own cavalry."

"What! Then you are——"

"A deserter," desperately. "For God's sake, ma'am, hide me somewhere, unless you wish to see me shot here on this porch. I beg you for——"

He intended to say "For Philippa's sake," but Miss Abby interrupted him.

"I will help you," she said, "Come."

The lingering remains of decency in the man smote him. Like all characters who are not wholly bad, who are simply weak, he could rise to the measure of obligation sometimes. He followed her into the house, therefore, and so soon as he was concealed from outside view he stopped her.

"Miss Abby," he said, "I am——"

"I know who you are," said the woman quietly; "I knew you as soon as I saw you. Come, you have no time."

"And you will hide me—for—for Philippa's sake?"

"What I do I do for her."

"Where is Philippa?"

"Dead—to you," answered Miss Abby slowly.

Fortunately Philippa was far afield down by the brook, where she was wont to play with her faithful black mammy as a guard. If only Miss Abby could get Graham hidden before she came back and before the soldiers came up.

"Miss Abby," said the man, striving to catch her hand as they ascended the stairs, true to his instincts even in his frightful peril, for a short shrift would have awaited him had he been captured, "I—I always—admired you."

"I know," said Miss Abby. "Go in there. The window opens on a balcony at the back of the house. From there you can get to the roof."

"But if the soldiers come?"

"I will keep them off. You need not fear."

She observed with a fierce joy in her heart that he was trembling.

"I've fought through four years of it, Miss Abby," returned the shame-faced man apologetically, "as long as there was a chance of success, but the whole cause has gone to smash and——"

"How were you wounded?" interrupted the woman.

"I was fired on by the guard yesterday when I tried to break away."

"I will do what I can for you," she said, closing the door and leaving him.

When the patrol of cavalry, scouring the country for deserters, which had been hot upon his trail, drew up before the great door of Heronshaw, Miss Abby was ready for them. Without a compunction

she told them that she had seen the deserter, that he had crossed the road and gone on. Such was her reputation that no man dreamed of questioning her statement. The officer, who had experienced her hospitality, accepted her words without hesitation. He led his men away, and when they had gone Miss Abby went upstairs and summoned Graham from the roof.

"You are safe now," she said, "they have gone up the road."

"Did you tell them——"

"I lied to them. I told them you were not here."

"God bless you, Miss Abby!" cried the man, seizing her hand and lifting it to his lips.

The woman suffered him without a change of countenance.

"You are tired?"

"Desperately."

"And hungry?"

"I have eaten nothing since early yesterday morning. I had no sleep all night. They hunted me like a runaway nigger, curse them!"

"Come in here." She threw open a door. "This is my room. You will be safe here, undisturbed. No one enters. I will bring you something to eat."

She ministered to him like an angel. She washed and bound the wound upon his face. She brought him the best that the ravages of war had left. The last bottle of wine of rare old vintage, which had remained concealed in the cellar, she gave to him.

He expanded under her treatment as a flower in the sun. Safe, comfortable, well-fed, his fears left him. He became more like his old self. All his fascination came back to him. Actually he made love to this woman. Neither of them spoke of Philippa; and Miss Abby had given orders that she should not be disturbed. The feelings that ran riot in her breast are beyond description. She discovered to her horror that she still loved this man. Yet her decision to take revenge upon him with her own hand was as strong as ever. She had thought swiftly enough, as he stood suppliant before her, a deserter from his colors, that she had but to say the word to see him executed, but that would not satisfy her. Her own hand must do the deed. Vengeance was her's, not God's.

She listened to him. She allowed him to ramble on. She did not discourage his efforts at lovemaking. She hated herself for her response to them. He would make love to a woman—any woman—if one foot were in the grave, she thought bitterly. She loathed him, yet she lingered. She spent a long time with him, and at last reluctantly withdrew and bade him rest. Forgetful of her so soon as she left him, he threw himself upon the bed and fell at once into a sleep so sound that it was almost a stupor, while she waited listening outside the door.

Miss Abby had fully made up her mind to kill him. One of the precious treasures of her heritage had been the sword of the first Herondine, a long, straight, sharp-pointed, keen-edged, Toledo rapier,

that one of her ancestors had bought in Spain when he went hither with young Charles I. on his mad escapade. She would wipe out the disgrace that had been put upon her family, the death of that child, the wreck of her sister's life, her own humiliation, with that bright and treasured blade. So soon as she satisfied herself that he was asleep she went downstairs to the library and fetched the weapon.

He was lying slightly upon his side with his arm thrown back, his throat exposed. She would drive it home there. She lifted the sword awkwardly, one hand on the hilt, the other on the blade, which cut her palm unheeded, and stood over him, white as death, rigid as a statue. She would smite him as Jael smote Sisera, as Judith slew Holofernes, as Saul hewed Agag. She was all ironside now. Yet she hesitated; why, she could not tell. Perhaps it was the sunlight. Holding the weapon with one hand she went softly to the windows, turned the slats of the Venetian blinds, which had been left open for coolness, and shut out the light. There was no hesitation in her heart. She could do it better in the darkness. That was all.

Yes, she loved him, but he must die. God had given him into her hands. She must slay him, the despoiler of her home. She went back to his side once more and lifted again the weapon. There was a prayer in her heart, of thankfulness for the opportunity, of desire that she might strike surely, and, by strange inconsistency, of appeal for the soul of the man she was about to send to his Maker.

Her hand did not tremble. She slowly lowered the point of the weapon to his throat. In good time she could throw her weight upon the blade. There was no hurry. One thrust and it would all be over.

A babble of laughter broke the silence. For the first time in years Philippa entered Miss Abby's room unannounced, uninvited. What had brought her there? One thing Miss Abby had been strict to enforce, and that was to train Miss Philippa to respect her sister's privacy. She must have some place where she could be absolutely undisturbed at times, else she would have broken down in the life she had set herself. And Philippa had never entered her room until on that afternoon. The younger woman stepped through the door she had opened, then stopped. Miss Abby turned and looked at her staring in the doorway.

Miss Philippa's eyes, aided by a touch of light from some unscreened crevice flashing on the steel, were caught by the shining weapon. With a little incoherent cry she ran forward, seized her sister by the arm, looked her in the face, and then, compelled by some hidden force, her eyes fell upon the sleeping figure on the bed. Her gaze strained down upon him. There was a moment of awful silence, a silence like that in which mind might have been added to matter, when God breathed the breath of life into mere common clay. A scream, that was as a pang of birth agony, burst from her lips.

"It's David, it's David!" she cried. "Thank God, he has come back to me! David, David!"

She threw herself upon the man's breast and entwined her arms around his neck. She kissed him with little inarticulate cries, differing from those she had uttered before, in that there was heart and soul and reason in their harmonies. The sudden sight of the man she had loved in her youth had called her back from that profound into which his cruelty and desertion had plunged her. She knew nothing of the past but that he was there, that he had come back to her, that she loved him.

Miss Abby, as if paralyzed, stood holding the weapon. Was it for this that he had returned. Was it for this that she had waited? Philippa loved him and he loved Philippa. What a repayment was here? Was it hatred, jealousy—what hideous bafflement was in her soul? Slowly Graham raised himself, sleep bewildered at first. He leaned upon one arm. He pushed off the clinging woman with the other hand and stared at her.

“Philippa?” he cried.

“David!” said the girl, lifting and extending her arms, “you have come back to me! You love me——”

Something snapped. Poor little Philippa—yet after all to be envied, thought Miss Abby, for she went into eternity with an assurance in her heart that the man she loved loved her as well. Could there be a heaven were she to be undeceived? Graham sprang to his feet, and lifting the prostrate body placed it tenderly on the bed.

“You said she was dead,” he gasped out hoarsely.

Miss Abby pointed to her sister.

"It is true—now."

There was a look on the face of Philippa that no one could mistake. The two gazed at her in silence.

"Thank God," whispered Miss Abby at last.

"That sword?" asked Graham. "What were you about to do?"

"Kill you. You deceived me. You broke my heart." All the long pent passion in the woman's soul rushed to her lips. "You came here and made love to me, a lonely woman, and I believed you! Must a woman smile, and laugh, and kiss, to love? I was yours body and soul. You—you threw me aside for Philippa. I do not wonder at that. That isn't what I blame you for. You wrecked that child's life. You deserted her as you deserted the army. You are a coward! She came back here five years ago in a storm. She was senseless when I took her in. The baby was born—your baby——"

"Where is the child?"

"Dead, thank God! We want none of your blood to pollute the earth. He is buried yonder under the cypress."

"And Philippa?"

"Until this hour she has been as a child. Her reason—thank God for it!—fled with the baby's birth. I pieced out her story from her ravings in delirium. I prayed daily, hourly that God might give you into my hands. And when you came this morning, I knew my prayer had been answered.

"And you were going to kill me?"

"Another second and I would have sent you to hell where you belong," said the woman slowly. In all the conversation she did not raise her voice from its quiet level, almost subdued monotone.

"If it had not been for Philippa—poor Philippa!" said the man.

He stared from the still figure of the dead to the stiller figure of the living. He was not lacking in intuition. Now he read Miss Abby's soul like an open book; not comprehending all—he was not strong enough for that—but enough. And the sight was more terribly accusing than the body of Miss Philippa. He was not all weakness, that man, else these two women would not have loved him.

"You are right," he said, "you have borne much from me. I will make atonement."

He threw out his arms, threw back his head.

"Strike!" he said.

Clenching her teeth Miss Abby lifted the sword. She pointed it straight at Graham's heart. She did not flinch nor quiver; neither did he. Suddenly the weapon fell ringing to the floor.

"I can not! Oh, God, I can not!" she whispered.

"No? Then I will revenge you, Miss Abby," said the man quietly.

"You will not kill yourself?"

"No."

"What then?"

Again the tramp of hoofs upon the hard road; the clanging of sabres, the jingle of bits, a word of quick command.



"Strike!" he said.—Page 180

"My friends down there will attend to me," he said, smiling strangely.

"David," she cried, snatching at him with blood-stained hands as he passed, "don't go!"

To-morrow, when it was to late, he would repent it bitterly, to-day he was determined. With a white set face he went out. She heard him go through the hall, she heard him descend the stair, she heard him hail the troopers. She ran to the window and tore back the blind. He was standing at the foot of the cypress tree where she had told him the baby was buried, looking down.

The troopers came clattering up the driveway.

"Graham!" cried the captain of the squadron. "At last!"

"I give myself up," said the man quietly. "I am a deserter."

"You shall be shot in the morning," said the officer, motioning for his men to lead the prisoner away.

"My God, my God," whispered Miss Abby, "have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me!"

Ninth Record

THE WRECK AND THE LETTERS *

I.

The smash-up was one of the worst that ever happened on the B. S. & W. road.

The Westfield night express had been wrecked at Elwood Junction about three o'clock in the morning. It had been raining more or less for a week all over the northwestern part of the State, and the bad weather had culminated in a cloud-burst. A small bridge, which was really nothing more than a short piece of trestle-work thrown over a small branch of the Elwood River, which was usually as dry as a floor, was partially washed out, the stringers, ties and rails being left standing.

In the darkness the engine went through it. The ravine was both shallow and narrow, the engine filled the space from bank to bank, and the baggage and mail car and the coach piled in on top of it. Later on they found the engineer, with his fireman also, dead under the engine, so that he was beyond censure for running at so high a speed—sixty miles an hour—under such conditions.

The train, which was the limited express of the

* By courtesy of "The Smart Set."

road, did no local business. There were only a few people in the coach, all of whom escaped with their lives, at least. The two rear sleepers did not leave the track, fortunately, but the first one, that carrying the through passengers from the south, strange to say, was telescoped with the preceding coach, in spite of the fact that it was a new and heavy Pullman. It was in that ill-fated car that most of the loss, save that among the train crew, occurred. The berths had nearly all been occupied, and nine passengers in the front half of the car were killed, while many were severely injured.

Fortunately, as it was summer, there was no conflagration to add its horrors to the scene. A special train with nurses and physicians and other helpers, together with the wrecking crew, was rushed down from Elwood without loss of time, and the work of rescuing the wounded and clearing the track was at once begun. The dead were laid along the station platform at Elwood, as they were removed from the special train, for identification prior to shipment to their several destinations, and the wounded were made as comfortable as possible either in the cars, at the station, or at the emergency hospital. By daylight, the claim-agent of the road, who, with other officials at Beverly, had been notified by wire, arrived, and took charge of the bodies.

There were two women, a little girl, a baby, a youth of seventeen, and four men. After more or less difficulty and delay they were all identified and their relatives communicated with, except in the case

of one man. He appeared to have been a tall, handsome man of about thirty. He had evidently undressed and gone regularly to bed in the sleeper, for he had nothing on him but a suit of pajamas. There was no mark of any sort on them, and nothing whatever to give any clue to the man's name on or about his person—a naked body in a suit of pajamas, that was all. The sleeping car conductor had been killed, while the porter was badly wounded and in a senseless condition.

Of course, the unidentified man's baggage and clothing were somewhere in the wreck, if they had not been ground to pieces in the ruin. But how to find such things, or how to identify them with the man, was a puzzling question. There was a great heap of miscellaneous articles on the station platform, which had been taken from the wreck, but at present it was impossible to separate or assign them to any one with any certainty. The claim-agent, a tall, slender young man, whose quiet, rather melancholy air gave little outward evidence of his inward keenness and capacity, was at his wits' end to know how to identify the body in question.

As he stood pondering the problem, one of his assistants came up and informed him that the porter of the wrecked sleeper had at last recovered consciousness, although it was evident that his hours were numbered. As he spoke four men brought the stricken negro out on the platform on a stretcher, intending to put him on a hospital train in which others of the more severely wounded were to be

taken down to Beverly. It was just possible, thought the claim agent, that the porter might be able to identify the man. He motioned to the bearers to halt, and then, with the help of the assistant, lifted up the dead body so that the porter could see the man's face.

"Wilder," said the claim-agent, gently, "I'm sorry to bother you now, but here is a passenger from your car about whom I can find out nothing. Can you help us to identify him? Do you know his name?"

The porter stared feebly at the face of the dead man.

"Doan know his name, suh," he muttered.

"Where was his berth? Can you recollect that?"

"He was in lowah five, suh, I think."

"Can you give us any other clue, Wilder?"

The wounded man thought deeply for a few moments, by a very painful effort.

"Yas, suh, he sent a telegram last night f'um Ladew to Miss Inez—Inez—Lancy—at——"

He stopped, faltered, struggled to go on. One of the bystanders proffered him a drink of whiskey, but he had fainted.

"Never mind," said the claim-agent, compassionately; "take him into the car, men. That's enough to trace this man."

Laying the dead man gently on the platform again, the claim-agent went into the telegraph office, and wired the operator at Ladew to repeat to him, for the purpose of establishing an identification, the

telegram sent last night at six o'clock by a passenger on number three to a Miss Inez Lancy, whereabouts unknown. In a short time the original message was in his hand. It ran this way:

Miss Inez Lancy,

Care of Hotel Sullivan, Westfield.

Will meet you Monday morning, at ten-thirty, same place.

HARRY.

Here was a valuable clue. A wire was at once despatched to the proprietor of the Hotel Sullivan, directing him to inform Miss Inez Lancy, presumably one of his guests, that a man, supposed to be the man who had appointed a meeting with her at ten-thirty that morning, and who signed his name "Harry," had been killed in the wreck at Elwood Junction, and to ask Miss Lancy if she would come down and identify the body, or give information which would lead to its immediate disposition.

Two hours' later, Miss Inez Lancy herself descended from the steps of the parlor-car on the morning local, and was received by the claim-agent, who had been notified by wire to expect her.

Miss Inez Lancy was dressed in black—not mourning, of course, there had been no time for that—but she had at least discarded all colors, save that which shone in her very pretty eyes and in the red of her rounded cheeks. She was a stunning-looking woman, if a trifle bold in her carriage. Tall, golden-haired, she made quite an imposing appearance, in spite of

her general air of agitation and, strange to say, of anxiety and apprehension. Yet there was something about her which impressed the claim-agent unpleasantly, something he did not like. There were things lacking in her, not compensated for by other things added. She did not seem quite—but her quality and her character were nothing to him. He put all such considerations aside, and met her with an excellent assumption of most respectful sympathy.

“I am the claim-agent of the road,” he said. “And you, I presume, are Miss Lancy?”

“Yes, yes,” she exclaimed, in great agitation. “Oh, sir, tell me——”

She clasped her hands appealingly, and looked at him from beneath the fronting shadow of her very large hat. The pose, the manner, the voice, were perfect, and yet——

“You got my wire, madam?” he asked, whereat she nodded.

“Yes. Take me to him at once.”

The body of the poor man had been taken to a local undertaking establishment, and a drive of a short distance, during which Miss Lancy elaborately sobbed into her handkerchief, brought them to the door. Once in the private room——“the mortuary chamber,” advertising circulars called it—the woman stepped to the side of the casket, and lifted the cloth covering the face of the dead.

“It is he, it is he!” she screamed, throwing herself upon the body with every outward manifestation of grief and agony.

She kissed the face of the dead again and again, lavishing endearments upon him. It was all very touching and affecting indeed, thought the claim-agent, and yet— However, he managed to quiet Miss Lancy at last. He took her to the village hotel, where, after getting the address of the man's relatives, he left her to the tender ministrations of the landlady and her assistants.

The man's name was Henry Richardson. He had been a mining-engineer by profession, and a heavy buyer and owner of mining properties in Colorado. His father was also greatly interested in mines, being one of the largest mine owners in that State. Miss Inez Lancy declared that she was the dead man's fiancée, that he was coming to Westfield that morning, as his telegram showed, to marry her forthwith. Her grief was terrible to see, and her condition evoked the sympathy and the pity of all the good women of the little town, who were unremitting in their efforts to assuage her sorrow.

The claim-agent immediately wired the elder Mr. Richardson, and received instructions to prepare the body for shipment in the best possible manner, and forward it to Denver without delay. The only train which made a Denver connection did not leave till night, however, and late in the afternoon the claim-agent received a telegram from Hot Springs, Arkansas, addressed to the local agent at Elwood, by the way, which greatly astonished him. It ran as follows, being written with a woman's discursiveness:

Henry Richardson, of whose death I am just informed, is my husband. Will arrive Tuesday morning. Hold body till I come.

MRS. HENRY RICHARDSON.

The story of the wreck had not yet appeared in any of the papers; there was no source from which the woman signing herself Mrs. Henry Richardson could have heard of her husband's death except from his father in Denver; for outside of the claim-agent and Miss Inez Lancy, no one else knew or could know of it. In the face of such reasoning, the conclusion that she was really the man's wife was irresistible.

If that were so, who was Miss Inez Lancy?

There had always been a suspicion of that young lady in the claim-agent's mind, he thought, triumphantly. He put the telegram in his pocket, after giving directions to hold the body and notify the father in Denver of this new development, asking advice from him, and walked slowly down the village street to the hotel. Arrived there he immediately asked for Miss Lancy.

"You can't possibly see her," said the landlady, a kind-hearted, motherly old body, who had been most attentive to the woman; "she is quite prostrated over this terrible affair, and is lying down. She must not be disturbed on any account."

"I am very sorry," insisted the claim-agent politely but firmly, "she must see me. I have an important message about Mr. Richardson."

"The poor thing's almost dead with grief and shock and——"

"Yes, yes, I know, but you must tell her I must see her at once, nevertheless."

The woman at last went off, evidently resentful of the claim-agent's lack of sympathy and consideration for her charge.

"Like the soulless corporation he represents, intruding upon the sorrows of that poor lamb upstairs," she muttered as she went.

Well, it turned out that Miss Lancy, "poor lamb," would see the claim-agent after all, and, after a few moments, he was ushered into her presence. The landlady showed a disposition to linger, but, at the claim-agent's pointed request, she at last flounced indignantly out of the room.

"Miss Lancy," said the claim-agent to that lady, who sat languidly, half reclining in a large arm-chair near the window, her face turned carefully away from the light, "I intended, in accordance with his father's directions to send the body of Mr. Richardson——"

"My poor, poor love!" wailed Miss Lancy.

"——to Denver to-night. But a few moments since I received a telegram from his——"

The claim-agent paused. The woman before him sat bolt upright now, her grief merged into a sudden interest in what he was about to say.

"Yes. Go on," she exclaimed; "from whom?"

"From his wife," answered the claim-agent

abruptly, at the same time carefully watching the face of his companion.

"His wife!" she faltered, turning very red indeed.

"Certainly, his wife. Didn't you know that he was married?" he asked swiftly.

"Of course—I—er—certainly not!" she answered in great confusion, "and I don't believe it, either. It is some imposter. Why, he was engaged to me. His telegram proved that."

It was a bold statement but it failed.

"It proved that he was coming to meet you, certainly, but nothing else," rejoined the claim-agent.

"That woman is some adventuress. I shall stay and face her. He was mine—mine!" burst out Miss Lancy vehemently.

It was exceedingly well done, thought the claim-agent admiringly. Miss Lancy might have made a fortune on the stage, he was sure, and he was an excellent judge. But to be a successful claim-agent it is necessary to be able to fathom human nature thoroughly, and Miss Lancy's whole performance did not deceive him.

"Miss Lancy," he said gravely, "I am sorry to be compelled to contradict you or to question your assertions, but I assure you that I am convinced that he was married and that the lady in question was his wife and——"

"I didn't know it anyway," she interrupted, desperately anxious to maintain her position.

"Pardon me, you virtually admitted it a moment since and——"

There was a knock at the door, which the claim-agent took the liberty of answering himself, under the circumstances. A moment after, he read a telegram sent him from the station, which was from Mr. Richardson, cancelling his former wire and directing the body to be held for the arrival of his son's wife.

"That settles it, Miss Lancy," said the claim-agent, putting the yellow slip of paper in her hand.

"I'll stay here and confront the woman!" she burst out viciously.

"Pardon me again," returned the claim-agent, suavely—he was a very polite claim-agent indeed, and he had been doing some hard thinking in the last few moments, "I think you will not."

"I will, I will, I tell you!"

What a coarse, vulgar woman! thought the claim-agent. All he said, however, was:

"You will go back to Westfield to-night, madam, and you will stay away from here till that man is shipped to Denver in the custody of his wife."

"Oh, will I? Who'll make me?"

"I trust your own good sense will show you that I am right."

"It doesn't. Now, who'll make me go?"

"I will. I won't have you make a scene and a scandal on our lines over that man in the presence of his poor, bereaved wife. Afterward you will do as you please. Now you will go, stay away and keep quiet."

"I'll do just as I please, now!" she retorted, defiantly, but evidently very ill at ease.

"The train leaves at nine to-night. I shall be here with a carriage at half after eight. Meantime, you will not mention this to any one, I am sure," he continued, inflexibly; then he bowed to her—the claim-agent was always polite—and left her baffled, furious, yet determined to have her way.

His calm confidence shook her assurance to a marked degree, yet she strove to keep up her spirits, and to cling to her resolution to stay just where she was and confront the wife. As for the claim-agent, in spite of his firmness he was filled with dismay. If Miss Lancy absolutely refused to go, he could see no way to compel her to leave except by force, which was not to be thought of. Yet, go she must. He was resolved that there should be no scene, no scandal about the dead man, no two women claiming rights that belonged to one, no adventuress—so he was satisfied Miss Lancy was to be described—disputing with the dead man's lawful wife. He even felt a sort of sympathy for the dead man himself, albeit his career evidently had not been a spotless one. The man's fame would be utterly blasted if Miss Lancy remained and created a scene, and he could say never a word nor urge a plea in his own defense. Yes, the woman must be got away at all hazards, but how? He racked his fertile brain for some means—and in vain.

His cogitations were interrupted by the approach of the general superintendent of the road, a veteran

railroad man, who had risen after many years from the ranks. He had assumed charge of the work of clearing the road that day.

"Here," he said, handing the claim-agent a thick package of letters, "you'd better take charge of these. They were picked up in the sleeper. The woman who wrote 'em, and the man, too, must be a bad lot. They're sickening, even to me."

The claim-agent took the package, and, returning to the station, he read over the first one. There was no name in the letter till the signature was reached, and that was "*Inez*"!

The letters could not be described. They revealed a depth of depravity on the part of the writer and receiver which made the claim-agent almost doubt their humanity. They settled one puzzling question, however. At half-after eight the claim-agent presented himself at the door of Miss Lancy's room. Bidden to enter, he found that young lady hatless and seemingly composed, with no outward intention of leaving that night.

"I've come for you, Miss Lancy," said the claim-agent.

"I see you have," she returned coolly, "and, as I said before, it does not suit me to leave to-night."

"Miss Lancy, do you recognize this letter?" said the claim-agent, spreading open one from the package, and holding it close to the lamp, so that she could see it.

The woman gazed at it, shivered violently, and turned a dull, angry red again.

"You're no gentleman!" she said, wrathfully, "to read a lady's letter! Besides, I didn't write it, any way," she went on, in a vain effort to repair her blunder.

"I should not like to have any one see such letters as these," said the claim-agent, "even the lowest—lady," he paused—and how she hated him for that pause—"in the land would not like that, would she?"

"You brute, you brute!" cried the woman, looking as if she could kill him.

"It is a quarter to nine now, Miss Lancy; we have just time enough to get to the station," said the claim-agent.

"I won't go, I tell you!"

"Allow me—your hat," he continued, unheeding her interruptions as he handed it to her.

"My bill—I haven't—I left my purse——" she faltered, rising in spite of herself.

"I'll attend to that. You will take my arm, so, this way—here is the carriage."

The claim-agent was a wonderfully polite young man.

He did not feel safe, however, until, standing on the platform, he watched the lights of the express bearing the unfortunate Miss Lancy northward, disappear in the darkness. It had been a trying day for the claim-agent. He took off his hat, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"And she forgot to ask me for the letters, she was so angry," he murmured in no little surprise, as he turned to go back to the hotel for the night.



II.

The morning express was due at Elwood at ten o'clock. The claim-agent met it, of course. As the long train drew up at the platform, he stepped back toward the steps of the southern through sleeper from St. Louis nerving himself up for the difficult and somewhat unpleasant task of receiving the widow of the dead mining-engineer. Only one passenger left the sleeper and that was a woman. The porter set her bag on the platform and reëntered his car. Uncertain as to direction in her unfamiliar surroundings, she turned away from the approaching claim-agent and paused in hesitation as to what to do next.

He had time before he reached her to notice that she was small in stature, but with a beautiful figure, well set off by her fashionably cut, exquisitely fitting black gown. Something about her appearance caused the heart of the claim-agent to throb madly in his breast. Instinctively, he quickened his pace, his arm stretched out toward her. He was close by her side when she turned suddenly, faced him, lifted her hand in great astonishment and exclaimed:

“ You! ”

The claim-agent recovered himself by a tremendous effort. Dissimulation is supposedly an attribute peculiar to the other sex, but he noticed that whereas he was successful in controlling himself the woman seemed utterly unable to regain her com-

posure. She stared at him as if he had risen from the dead. Her face, which had been very pale, slowly flamed with color, her lip trembled until she bit it to keep it still, and a light, whether of terror, surprise, satisfaction, or appeal, or a blending of all four, he could not tell, came into her brown eyes.

"You!" she exclaimed again breathlessly.

"Yes, I," he answered formally, lifting his hat and making an attempt to pass her.

"I did not—I did not expect——" she faltered.

"No, I suppose not," he answered with some bitterness, "but you will pardon me, I am expecting a lady——"

"A lady?" she interrupted, with a curiously resentful intonation.

"Yes, the widow of a passenger killed in a wreck at——"

"I forgot him," murmured the woman in deep contrition.

"All aboard!" called the conductor suddenly.

"Wait," cried the claim-agent, lifting a warning hand and putting his foot on the car step, "I must see if she is on the sleeper."

"I am Mrs. Richardson," abruptly said the woman to whom he had been speaking, at the same time laying her hand on his arm.

The claim-agent stepped from the car, signaled to the conductor to go ahead—that was the first thing to be done—and once more faced the woman. This time he was the weaker vessel.

"Oh!" he exclaimed, lamely enough, as the train slowly passed them.

The woman nodded. The claim-agent bowed formally again.

"I beg your pardon," he said, making a valiant effort to recover his self-possession, "I did not know."

"Of course not; how could you?"

"If you will come this way, madam, I have a carriage here; I will take you to him."

He managed to speak indifferently, in spite of his excessive agitation.

"I must tell you," said the woman, so soon as they entered the carriage, "that—after we—after I left you and was married—to—him—I found out what a terrible mistake it was. And—oh, don't look at me so! It is cruel!"

She leaned her head against the cushions, and sobbed bitterly.

The claim-agent did not know what to do, and he was a rarely resourceful young man, too. He knew well enough what he wanted to do, however. He wanted to slip his arm around the woman's waist, lay her head on his shoulder, take her hands in his and comfort her—kiss away her tears. He had done this for her before, too, but it did not seem quite appropriate conduct for the present strange situation. So he sat up very straight and stiff, and did nothing. 'Tis a wise claim-agent who knows when to do nothing.

"We had not lived—together—since the first few

months of our marriage, six years ago," resumed his companion, after a time.

Ah, well he knew the time! He could recall as yesterday the shock sustained by a young railroad man who had gone West to seek his fortune, when he received that incoherent, blotted, tear-stained letter from the sweetheart who had promised to wait for him, begging him to forget her because she was going to be married to another man. Absence, poverty, the wishes of friends, the pressure of parental desire, had overborne her resistance. And now he was sitting by her side again, his pulses beating, his soul thrilling. And she was married and her husband was dead, and he was taking her to him. And, until this moment, he had never known the man's name. Her voice called him to himself again.

"There was no scandal, no divorce; we just separated. Henry—Mr. Richardson—was such a good man. When he found I loved—that I did not care for him—he—he had a right to be very angry, as he was. It was my fault. I ought never to have married. I was to blame. He was so good and true a man!"—the claim-agent thought grimly of Miss Inez Lancy and the package of letters in his pocket, but he said nothing—"And now he is dead, in this sudden, awful way—poor Henry!"

She broke down and sobbed afresh as the carriage stopped. The claim-agent got out, and offered her his hand.

"Is—he—in there?" she asked.

"Yes. Do you wish to see him now?"

She nodded, dropped her veil, and followed the claim-agent into the room. Her demeanor there was very different from what Miss Lancy's had been. She stood quietly looking upon the face of the dead, murmuring, "Poor, poor Henry!" in a pitying, half-caressing voice. The claim-agent hated himself for it, but fierce pangs of jealousy tore his heart at the sight and sound. Finally, oblivious of his presence, apparently, she said quietly, solemnly almost, as if making a vow or taking an oath:

"We did not love each other, Henry, or, at least, I did not love you, and we were not happy together; but in all your grief you were true to me, and so I shall be to your memory."

The claim-agent thought again of Miss Inez Lancy and her letters, and this time with even a grimmer feeling than before; but, as before, he said nothing.

As was only proper, the claim-agent devoted himself to his companion until her departure. In spite of her marriage she seemed to him as innocent and artless as she had been when he loved her as a girl. The intervening years were wiped out of the man's memory. He forgot everything but that he was in her presence again. For some men, only to look at the woman beloved is to drink of the waters of Lethe. And before they parted the claim-agent spoke his heart.

"Amy," he said, "under any other circumstances, I should never have mentioned it now. But you are leaving in an hour. Our paths lie wide apart. I may never have another opportunity to speak to you.

You have been separated from your—from Mr. Richardson for over five years, you said. You did not love him. I believe you once loved me. It seems horrible to speak of it now, but I want you to know that I care for no woman but you, that I never have, that I never shall. I love you more than I ever did; and if, after awhile, you will take me, I shall devote my life to making you happy. I have been faithful all these years and shall be to the end.”

There was an acute though unintentional reproach in much that he said, and she winced under it; yet the depth of his passion, which could even forgive her own defection, moved her intensely. His plea was the more impressive because he made it so simply, with so much directness, with scarcely an alteration in the tones of his voice even. Only his hand, lying on the table beside her, tightly clenched and trembling betrayed his agitation. She answered him as simply and quietly as he had spoken.

“Frank,” she said, “I can not deny my own heart now; and especially in this solemn hour it seems that I should speak only the truth. Where Henry has gone,” she went on idealizing the dead man in a way that was quite natural and to be expected, “there is all truth, I know, and even he would not care now. I never cared for him; I always loved you. It was because of that we separated. I made him very unhappy in his life. Something tells me he loved me to the end. He might have secured a divorce at any time, but he never did. And now

he is dead. He probably died thinking of me, loving me. I owe him a long reparation and I intend to make it. You heard what I said over his dead body. I mean it. My conscience hurts me when I think of what I made him suffer. Poor Henry!"

It was a strange and unusual situation, indeed.

"You seem to care more for him dead than you ever did for him living?" questioned the claim-agent sadly.

"Yes, perhaps I do," she answered slowly. For the moment she almost fancied she loved her husband. "And I am going to be faithful to his dead memory, too."

The luxury of being a martyr was already exercising its powerful fascination upon her. Yet she lifted her eyes to the face of the young man before her and paused. He looked white and drawn and pained. He had risen and both hands were tightly clasped now. At the sight of him, pity for him and love for him fought with duty and martyrdom in her heart—but in vain. She, too, rose and laid her hand tenderly on his breast.

"Don't grieve so, Frank," she said softly, "I am not worth it"—and perhaps she was not, but when did that ever comfort or convince a lover?—"But so far as my heart goes it is yours; it always has been yours, it always will be yours. But marriage is not for me."

"Very well, Amy," resignedly said the claim-agent, seeing the futility of further appeal. "If the time ever does come you will let me——"

"It will never come," she answered firmly.

After she had left him that night, the claim-agent took out the package of letters and went over them again. Yes, there was no doubt of it. Richardson was arranging to get a divorce, after which Miss Lancy evidently hoped and expected he would marry her, if the bad letters of a bad woman were to be accepted as evidence. So far from having been faithful and devoted to his wife, the letters proved that he had been untrue to her, that he hated her. Poor Amy! if she only knew what was in those letters. "Poor Henry!" And she thought him such a good man!

A terrible temptation seized the claim-agent as he thought over the situation. The woman he loved would be faithful to an ideal; but for that she would marry him and he could make her so happy. The letters told all. He could shatter her ideal in an instant. It would be so easy to send the letters to her anonymously. He would never be suspected. The letters belonged to her, anyhow; she was the man's wife, and should succeed to his property. She had taken everything else belonging to him away with her; only these were left. They would open her eyes, indeed, if only they were sent to her. But the claim-agent could not do that. Richardson was dead and helpless now. He could not strike at a dead man. He could not win a woman's consent to marry him by such means as that, not even if he was sure she loved him, and he was sure he could make her very happy. No, there was nothing he could do.

The letters were sealed up in an envelope and, with other unclaimed articles of value, were put in the claim-agent's safe for future disposition. He took up the round of life again bravely enough, but the recent meeting had thrown him back in feelings six years. He was just where he had been. It was all to do over again. It was all bitter hard on the claim-agent. Sometimes the hardest task that can be allotted to humanity is for a gentleman to remain a gentleman.

III

Six months after the Elwood wreck the second vice-president of the road, who was also its general attorney and the head of its legal department—to whom, indeed, the claim-agent reported—sent for that young man.

Among the many suits which had been brought against the road growing out of the Elwood wreck, the most dangerous was that for one hundred thousand dollars for the death of Henry Richardson. The claim was supported by affidavits of his earning capacity, income, expectation of life, and so on, which made it most formidable and difficult to meet and the best lawyer in the State was retained by the plaintiff, suit being entered in the name of the dead man's estate.

From the viewpoint of the road, the amount sued for was preposterous. In turn, they had offered to settle for five thousand dollars, but the proposition

had been laughed to scorn by the attorney for the estate. How the suit was to be combated successfully did not appear to the general attorney, unless some pressure could be brought to bear on the plaintiff or his counsel.

The general attorney did not immediately disclose the state of affairs to his young subordinate, who had only that morning returned from an extended trip over the lines, and the latter was in entire ignorance of the fact that the road had been sued for such an amount. Consequently, he was quite off his guard; and when the general attorney asked if he had not in his safe some incriminating letters or papers which had been found among the effects of the late Henry Richardson, he at once replied in the affirmative.

“Ah! I thought so,” exclaimed the hard-headed old veteran, a gleam of satisfaction overspreading his craggy countenance. “The superintendent told me about them; says that they’re bad, indeed; quite ruin the dead man’s reputation if published, and so on. Fetch them here at once, and let me have a look at them, please.”

Now, there was no earthly reason why the general attorney should not look at the letters, yet the claim-agent felt exceedingly reluctant to put them in his possession. Yet, just because he really could think of no reason for refusing, he at last complied. A glance or two put the shrewd old lawyer in possession of their contents. He struck the bell on his desk, and, motioning the claim-agent to remain, he bade

the porter admit Judge McChesney. At that name, which was borne by the most distinguished lawyer in the State, unless it was the general attorney himself, the claim-agent started, but said nothing.

"Ah, good morning, Judge," said the general attorney, briskly. "You wanted to see me once more about the Richardson case, I believe," referring to a note on the table. "Well, I have nothing to add to our previous offer of settlement."

"Which I have once for all emphatically declined," said the judge, firmly. "I am empowered, however, to settle for seventy-five thousand dollars cash in hand. This is our lowest, I may say our final proposition."

"Which I also unhesitatingly decline."

"And you will do nothing more than the paltry amount you have already offered?"

"Nothing more. Seventy-five thousand is a preposterous amount. No jury would ever award you a tithe of that sum."

"We'll chance that. The facts are plain, the evidence is clear and convincing, and we are quite ready, indeed, anxious, to go into court with you."

"You will find us there when you are," said the general attorney, calmly.

"May I ask if this suit is brought for, or in behalf of, Mrs. Richardson, Judge McChesney?" interrupted the claim-agent, at this juncture.

"I don't mind telling you," answered the judge, after a reflective pause, "that she is only mentioned in the will, given a pittance in the hope of avoiding

a contest, I presume, though I've nothing to do with that. The suit is brought for the estate at the instance of the deceased's father, who is also his executor. Now, Mr. General Attorney, if you have nothing further to say, we will leave the decision of the case to the courts. I am sorry that we are unable to agree."

The judge hesitated a moment, arose and took his hat.

"Good morning, gentlemen," he said, turning toward the door.

"Oh, Judge," said the general attorney, as if a thought had suddenly struck him, "a moment, please. Just cast your eye over that."

He detached a letter from the bundle of papers on the desk, and handed it to the judge. The latter fixed his eyeglasses on his nose, and scanned the paper, at first indifferently.

"What's this?" he said, with sudden interest. "Pah! What disgusting rot! What is it?"

"That," said the general attorney, nonchalantly, "is one of a bundle of letters addressed, as I learn from others in the package here, to Mr. Henry Richardson by one Inez Lancy, a woman whose reputation is as unsavory as her correspondence."

Judge McChesney removed his hat and sat down once more.

"Are there others like it?" he asked.

He had quite made up his mind to destroy it then and there if it were the only one in existence. The general attorney selected a second letter at random

from the bunch, and passed it over. He knew quite well what was passing in the other man's mind. He would have done it himself in like circumstances.

"Plenty," he answered. "You may retain those two, if you like, Judge; they are samples of the rest. Each one worse than the others. We don't need em."

"And you propose——?"

"Excuse me, we propose nothing."

"Why then——?"

"Oh, your client was such a fine fellow, we really wanted you to know him. That stuff would make fine reading for his wife and family, to say nothing of the general public, wouldn't it?"

The claim-agent started at that, but neither of the two men was paying the slightest attention to him at that juncture. Judge McChesney threw the two letters down on the desk near the rest, while the general attorney gathered them carefully up. They were of no use to the judge unless he could get them all. The general attorney handed the completed packet to the claim-agent again, while the judge hemmed violently, and took off his eyeglasses and wiped them carefully.

"Such documents," he began at last, "while highly distressing to friends and relatives, have no legal force in a case of this kind, you understand."

"My dear Judge," said the general attorney, in a politely remonstrative voice, "legal force? I am surprised that you should think for a moment that we contemp——"

“Nonsense!” interrupted the judge vehemently. I’ll tell you what we’ll do. We’ll settle for fifty thousand and the letters.”

“Five thousand,” said the general attorney, persuasively.

“See you damned first!” retorted the judge, seizing his hat again.

As he did so, he cast a glance at the claim-agent. That young man was standing by the hard coal fire glowing in the open grate—it was midwinter now—looking intently down at a familiar package of papers blazing fiercely. The judge stopped again, as if petrified. The general attorney followed his opponent’s gaze with a glance of his own. As he took in the situation, he sprang to his feet with an oath, and darted toward the fireplace.

“What’s that?” he cried furiously.

“Those letters,” answered the claim-agent, resolutely. He was very pale, but quiet and determined.

“Did you——?” began the general attorney.

“I dropped them there,” answered the claim-agent.

“Accidentally?”

The claim-agent shook his head.

“Designedly?”

The claim-agent bowed.

There was a moment of fearful silence. Judge McChesney broke it.

“You won’t settle for seventy-five thousand, then? No? Well, good morning.”

They could hear him laughing clear down the hall.

"Why in h—l did you do that?" roared the general attorney. He was furious with anger. "That was our best card. We'll be mulcted in terrific damages. That would have held him off. Why, sir, why?"

There was no answer.

The general attorney stared hard at the claim-agent for a little space, mastered his temper slowly, and spoke more quietly at last.

"That will cost the road a pretty penny, but it will cost you something individually—your position. Sit down at that desk and write out your resignation at once. I accept it in advance."

The claim-agent bowed, sat down, scribbled a few moments, blotted the paper, glanced over it, and tendered it to the general attorney.

"Very good," said that functionary, briefly. "Now go, sir, and the sooner the better."

"Before I go I have something to say on my own account," said the claim-agent, standing up very straight and looking his superior in the eye. "I burned those letters because I would not be a party to any blackmailing scheme on the part of this road. Either we are liable for heavy damages or we are not. I am not running this road, or its legal department, but I won't assist at any unfairness or chicanery. In the long run, I believe that even a railroad will make more and pay better by being strictly honest than by any sharp practices whatsoever. Those let-

ters have no connection with this case, on its merits. To publish them or to get them in as evidence, if it could have been done, would have brought disgrace on the man's wife and family, and it would have been bad policy, besides."

"What are the man's wife and family to you, sir?" coolly asked the general attorney, who was much interested in the speech of the claim-agent.

"His family, nothing; his wife, much. Since you ask about my private affairs, I'll tell you that I knew her when she was a young girl. I——"

"Oh!"

"Yes, sir, I was in love with her then, and I am now, and——"

"And you hope to win her by the story of this noble act on your part, do you?"

"I don't know how she is to find it out unless you tell her," returned the claim-agent, hotly. "She did not love her husband, and she did love me. They were separated shortly after their marriage, into which she was forced by her parents. But she thinks she has wronged him by her indifference, and she believes he was faithful to her. She refused me again last summer because she wished to be true to his memory. I could have given her the letters then, and, by proving his unworthiness, perhaps I might have won her for myself."

"Why didn't you, then?"

"I could not."

"That's twice you have been a fool," said the older

man, contemptuously, yet with a certain admiration in his mind for the other.

"Maybe, but I think I'd rather be a fool than a general attorney," answered the claim-agent, turning to go.

IV

It was not easy for him to get anything to do after his sudden and summary dismissal from the B. S. & W. road, but the claim-agent—claim-agent no longer—at last succeeded in securing a temporary appointment, pending something better, in one of the big corporations in Chicago. To him a few weeks later, entered a messenger with a statement that there was a lady in the reception-room who desired to see him.

Amy Richardson met him on the threshold.

"Is there any place where we can be quite alone for a few moments without being interrupted?" she asked, so soon as she saw him, and before he had time to say a word even.

The president of the company was fortunately absent for the day, and, by permission of the manager, the agitated claim-agent led the woman he loved into the luxurious little private office, where they were as much alone as if they had been marooned on a desert island. She seated herself nervously in a large, capacious arm-chair, which her tiny figure by no means filled, while he stood erect before her. He noticed with a thrill of satisfaction

that, while her perfectly-fitting gown was dark in color and most unobtrusive in style, she was not in mourning. As for the rest, her cheeks were flushed and her eyes bright with—was it satisfaction, anticipation, or what? Again, he could not tell. Altogether she looked, he thought fatuously, even younger and sweeter than she had looked six years before. However, he only stared at her, saying nothing.

“Oh, do sit down, Frank,” she began at last. “It makes me nervous to see you standing there. That’s better,” she continued, as he obeyed her command. “That suit, you know, about my—about Mr. Richardson—” She paused. He nodded. “It was settled last week. Had you heard?”

“No.”

“The plaintiff compromised for ten thousand dollars.”

“I congratulate——”

“Hush! Do you think I would touch a penny of it, or of his money in any shape now? No; five thousand went to the estate and five thousand to——”

She paused again.

“Not to you?” asked the man.

“To a certain woman named Lancy!”

The murder was out in spite of his efforts, then.

“I’m sorry you heard,” he began, vaguely, feeling that he ought to say something, although, to be honest, he was not really sorry at all.

“And I am glad, glad!” she cried, impetuously.

"Oh, the low, mean, wretched woman! And I thought him so noble, faithful, too."

"I'm sorry," said the claim-agent, vaguely, rising and coming toward her as he spoke.

He stopped by her chair, took her hand in his own, and she did not withdraw it. She turned away her head, too, but he could see the color mounting in her cheek, mark the rapid rise and fall of her breast. The man's heart was beating rapidly. He scarce knew what he was doing.

"And I know about you, too," she went on, more softly, so that he had to bend very low over her to hear her. "Judge McChesney told me how noble and self-sacrificing you had been with those wretched letters."

"Did he say that?"

"Well, not exactly. He told me the facts, the words are my own."

"Thank you. It was nothing."

"It was the finest thing I ever heard. That woman filed a lien or something or other on the suit, you know, when she learned it was being brought; he had promised her money, and she had letters, his letters—I can imagine what hers were you burned from those I saw. She was going to produce them in court, so Mr. Richardson's father compromised the suit, and she got half, as I said. No, don't interrupt me," she went on hastily, as he strove to speak. "If I am stopped now I'll never be able to begin again. After I heard about it I went to your office to—to see you, and you were gone. They sent me

to the general attorney. They said he was an awfully gruff man, but I found him a dear. He was nice to me, and he gave me your address. They kept track of you, you see, and I came right here and—and——”

She stopped, drew her hand away from him, hid her face and cowered down in the great chair before his steady gaze.

“Amy,” he said, stooping quite low, and taking her in his arms, “does this mean that you will let me love you at last?”

“It means more than that,” she whispered.

“Oh, Amy!” rapturously, “will you promise again to wait for me until I get a permanent position and am able to——?”

“I won’t wait another minute, Frank!”

“Amy, what do you mean?”

“I’ve waited long enough. I—we——”

“Will you marry me now, Amy?”

“Whenever you like. This very minute!”

It was some time before any coherent conversation was possible or necessary, but when it was, she drew back a little, saying:

“Oh, Frank, dearest, there is something else. The general attorney told me to tell you to come back; since the suit was settled, your old place was open for you with an increase of salary. I think he likes you.”

“Hardly, but——”

“Wait, that isn’t all yet. He told me to tell you, after seeing me, that you weren’t such a—a—he swore awfully—fool, after all!”

Tenth Record

THE ATHEIST *

I

The little Bishop was one of the most tactful of men. Some men get to be bishops—heaven only knows how—who have no tact whatever. Their lives thereafter are most miserable, and their dioceses do not especially enjoy the situation either. Of all the places in which a man may find himself in which are made insistent demands on every possible quality that goes to promote success, that of a bishop is the hardest to fill. Especially is this true in a Western semi-missionary diocese. The Bishop thereof has to be everything that every other leader in secular affairs must be—all things to all men and the same to all women, which is harder—to win success, and in addition he has to be a lot more things which are usually considered incompatible with success commanding qualities.

To be a servant of God and a leader of men at one and the same time is to solve an almost unsolvable problem. Opportunities for trying the experiment, in the episcopal line at any rate, are rare, but the statement may not be gainsaid. Read the promises

* By courtesy of "The New York Herald."

in the Ordinal, which, in the nature of things being merely general, seem to cover all possible contingencies that may arise.

Tact, therefore—that subtle, intangible quality, which is so unsusceptible of exact definition that everybody explains it differently—is one of the most valuable assets to bring to the solution of an episcopal problem, or any other problem. One can not be tactful with the subtleness and diplomacy of a successful scoundrel, either, or even with the skill and address of a wise and prosperous man of the world, but one must be tactful with the righteousness and veracity of a saint. This further complicates matters.

Fools rush in where angels fear to tread! I never could understand why there are so many men in the Church thirsting for a chance to wear the mitre. Perhaps in the fact that they are usually very young men lies the explanation.

The Bishop was tactful in the right way, and as he was a man of brilliant parts he usually succeeded in what he attempted to do. The rest of us who worked with him in the diocese, with the rash impetuosity of youth were inclined to take the problematical bull by the horns whenever he presented himself, and try to coerce him by brute strength rather than slip a ring through his nose and lead him gently along, filled with the idea that he was only going where he desired and doing as he wished. Consequently, we usually failed in delicate operations, and the Bishop had to come to our rescue. A Bishop has to be a sort of moral Macchiavelli, anyway.

For instance, once there was a man who was on the vestry of a church of which the Bishop was rector before he was made Bishop. He was not a religious man in any sense—the man, not the Bishop, of course. It does not take much religion to qualify for a vestryman, sometimes. They had but a limited field to draw from for the making of vestries out there, and too close a scrutiny might have abolished most of the vestries. The Bishop found him on the vestry when he took the parish and he had remained there. He was a thorn in the Bishop's side, for he was what is known as a "near man." Nobody had succeeded in getting him very far away from one of his own dollars. That was a most unusual qualification for a vestryman who, in certain schemes of parish administration, is expected, with his fellows, to pay the church bills—his election by his fellow laborers in the vineyard being mainly for that specific purpose.

They had a meeting of the vestry one night, and resolved on some extensive repairs to the church, which needed it badly. The man in question was absent, which he never would have been if he had known the spending of money was in contemplation. Possibly, though I don't say so, the Bishop had taken advantage of his absence to bring up the matter. The next day he met the Bishop upon the street and berated him tremendously for presuming to urge the spending of the necessary moneys. The language that he used was shocking. As he became more and more indignant with each successive mention of the

amount, he scolded the Bishop like the proverbial fishwife, his vituperation passing all bounds.

The Bishop had a great deal of the temper of St. Paul in him. Alexander the Coppersmith would have fought shy of him, I am sure. He was aggressive by nature, the man had angered him excessively, and he restrained himself on the public street with great difficulty. Finally matters reached such a point that he only saved himself from breaking out by turning away.

He rushed off to his study, sat down, and wrote that man a letter, and the Bishop was a master with his pen, too. The document was entirely adequate to the situation, from a human standpoint, so those of us thought who were conversant with the facts, to whom he read it; and when it was finished the little man surveyed it with much pride, in which we all shared. It was an epistolary gem—of its kind.

Then he reflected that, contrary to his practice when unusually provoked, he had not read a portion of Pusey's famous sermon on Patience, so he hauled forth the well worn volume from his pocket, where he kept it for emergencies of this kind, and read over some paragraphs of the sermon which he already knew by heart. He came to the conclusion before he had read much that a man who could speak so to him, and on the public street, too, could not possibly be a Christian, and that he should not heed what he had said. Under the circumstances there was something else to be done—something better.

He tore that letter up, and sat down and wrote another, never mentioning the cause of the dispute or referring to the man's outrageous conduct in the slightest manner. It was one of the tenderest, sweetest appeals to the man for him to take thought for the future and attend to the salvation of his soul—for him to come into the Church and be a real Christian instead of a mere vestryman—that we ever listened to.

Most everybody hated that man because he was selfish and quarrelsome, and he knew his unpopularity, rather gloried in it, in fact. He had felt a little ashamed of his conduct after the Bishop left him, and that appeal, coming at the right time, touched his heart. No one had ever concerned himself greatly about his soul before. The letter worked a real reformation. He presently qualified for a higher degree in the church membership than that of a vestryman, and that his conversion was sincere was evidenced by the fact that he made the Bishop a standing offer that he would give one-tenth of any sum that he might desire to raise for any church purposes at any time! That was much for him, for where his treasure was there was his heart also. That was a sample of the Bishop's tact. Here is another:

Once he had to raise a large sum of money by a certain date. He had been preaching in the wealthy churches of an Eastern diocese making his appeal. The last Sunday before the appointed day he found he still lacked a considerable amount. The church

which had offered him hospitality was one of the wealthiest in the city. He had hoped to get the required sum there. It rained—oh, how it did pour that day, a regular deluge. There were perhaps three dozen people in the church. His heart sank.

He almost felt it would be of no use for him to make his appeal to that handful, yet remembering the advice of one of his homely Western friends to “Allus give ’em the best ye’ve got in the shop, no matter whatsoever, Right Rever’nd,” he did his very best. He appealed to the faithful two score as if they had been two thousand. After the service one man invited him to dinner, and after dinner he took him into his library, drew out a check book, and said, “I’ll make up the balance. How much did you say you needed?”

“Wait,” said the Bishop, after thanking the man for his generous offer, “there yet remain two or three days before the time limit expires. It is probable that I may receive sums of money from other sources which will prevent me from calling upon you for so much as I need now, and I can save you something.”

“Very well,” replied the man; “come around on the day before.”

The required sum had diminished by more than one-half by belated offerings, and it was with much pride that the Bishop told his new friend how much less he should require from him. The man wrote a check for double the amount and handed it to the Bishop, with the remark that it was the first time

anybody asking for money for religious purposes had ever endeavored to save him a penny, and he appreciated it so much that he gave him twice as much as he asked for, and, what was better still, told him to come again. He was a man to be trusted not to appeal for an unworthy object.

One time the wardenship of a certain divinity school became vacant. The Bishop was much interested in the school and deemed the selection of a new warden to be of great importance. Among the trustees was a party which, by ecclesiastical bias, naturally antagonized anything and everything the Bishop put forth. The Bishop had a candidate to whom he had pledged such trustees as he could influence, not quite a majority. The other side, it was learned, had no candidate, and appeared to have no definite plan except to beat the Bishop.

The Bishop's heart was set upon getting Dr. Silver, perhaps the best man that could be selected. When the meeting was held for the purpose of election and nominations were declared in order, the Bishop got up and in a very emphatic manner put forth some reasons, which were exceedingly weak, of course, why Dr. Silver should *not* be nominated and elected. The other party thereupon immediately put the man in nomination, and he was elected unanimously, much to their surprise.

"You see," said the Bishop afterward, "I not only wanted to have the doctor elected, but I also wanted everybody committed to support him."

We used to make a great deal of fun of the Bishop

for this transaction. Yes, whatever the old man set his heart upon he was generally able to achieve. He only failed in one thing, but somebody else succeeded there in the strangest way.

II

There was a woman in the diocese named Norris. Probably there were many women named Norris, but this one was distinguished from the others because she was that rare thing among women, an atheist. Stranger still, her husband was a devout churchman, and her course was a lasting grief to him. He never lost his faith, however—faith that it would come right in the end, that is, and sure enough it did. She was a brilliant woman and had been in early days a zealous Christian, but something had shattered her faith; some calamity, some trial to which she had been unequal, had utterly destroyed her religion.

In her heart, Mrs. Norris not only denied the existence of God, but she became a zealous propagandist of her lack of belief. She was ready to dispute with any one upon the subject, and liked nothing better than to argue with "Professing Christians," especially the clergy. I have generally found the clergy fond of argument, especially if they can do it all themselves. They do not like to be talked back to. As she was a woman of keen intellect and great mental power, easily surpassing many of the clergy in that, and as she had studied the arguments for her side of the proposition, she usually got the better of her reverend disputants in discussions.

There was one, however, with whom she could not argue, and that was the Bishop. There were two reasons, first, because she was not able enough to sustain a controversy with a man of his calibre and acumen, and, second, because after some few discussions he would no longer argue with her. Realizing that it was not a case for argument, he cast about in his mind for other means of converting her, but vainly. He tried to influence her in every possible personal way short of controversy. We used to think sometimes that he shook her confident assurance by his very being, but she never admitted it.

Among the clergymen of the city there was a Churchman so high that he was an extremist. The atmosphere of that section of the country was not congenial to the growth of such an exotic, and he languished, or his parish did, which was worse. How he came there and why he stayed there we never could find out. But there he was, and there he stayed in spite of everything.

Your extreme High Churchman, your elaborate ritualist, is either a fat autocrat or a lean martyr. A few, a very few, of them in the great cities are the popes of large congregations which they have attracted to them by their talents and by their self-sacrifice. Most of them, especially in small towns or country dioceses, are the slaves of their narrow and rigid opinions. Many of these last—and I bear testimony gladly to their sincerity and devotion—are martyrs. I know many men who suffer hardships almost incredible in this day, for that they believe—

men of talent and ability who could fill acceptably larger places, where they would not only be more useful but more comfortable, but who are quite willing, nay, anxious, to sacrifice themselves for their convictions. I pity them, but I honor them. Many a black cassock covers a sick, worn, hungry, chilly body when that body encloses the soul of an extreme High Churchman. To be extreme in anything is to invite martyrdom at best.

The Rev. Littleton Talbot was a martyr. This kind is always a celibate, and as he had no wife in whom to confide, no one, not even the Bishop, who generally knew everything, realized on what a bare pittance he subsisted, and to what desperate straits he was reduced in the parish of St. Mary the Most Blessed Virgin Mother—the name was almost bigger than the parish. He had a stipend from the Missionary Board, which was always promptly paid, even if, as was often the case, the Bishop had to pay it himself out of his own meagre and intermittent salary. But that stipend went to the poor, and if anything was left it went to the ornaments and adornments of the church, which was his passion. He would rather have a new cope than a warm coat; he preferred incense to a good fire, and who shall fault him?

Chance threw him in the society of Mrs. Norris. Here was a foeman worthy of his steel. He would convert her. He spoke to the Bishop about it, and the Bishop told him to go ahead, perhaps partly because it was difficult to deny him. There

the Bishop made one of his rare mistakes. He had to make a mistake once in a while or he would not have been human. Littleton Talbot was about as unadapted and ill-equipped for that purpose as one could well conceive. He had a zeal for God, but alas! not according to knowledge. Most zeal for God is of that kind. He plunged blindly and came to grief. That, however, neither the Bishop nor any one could have expected.

The woman took a cruel delight in torturing the man. She vitiated all his convictions, shattered all his contentions, and he was just bright enough to see the point of her arguments without being bright enough to find out where she was weak. Personally as well, for she was a woman and beautiful, she dazzled him. To convert her he came often to see her.

He became more and more unsettled in his belief and practices. She parted him from his moorings, mental, spiritual and physical. He had no confidants and he had to fight it out alone. It is not good for a man to be alone under such circumstances, if ever. He went through the mechanical round of his duties, observing his saints' days, his fasts and his vigils, his matins, his lauds and so on; intoning his services, swinging his censers, wearing his copes, as he had always done; but his heart went out of it all. The savor and sweetness of it were gone for him.

He was thin, pale, emaciated before; he became a nervous wreck. Like the moth fluttering about the candle, he went back again and again to that woman.

He heard over and over what she had to say. Her keen, clever, brilliant sentences permeated his brain. By and by he fell—and great was the fall of him! He was absolutely and utterly conquered, beaten, broken, ruined, carried away.

He came to her house the day before Christmas with blasphemy on his lips. With all her clever intuition she had never dreamed of what was passing in the man's mind. It had been a sport, a game to her, in which she had not realized the torture she had inflicted nor the consequences of her playing. She was horrified when she saw the ruin she had effected. No one had ever questioned her integrity, her honesty, her purity before. She had preserved these in spite of her atheism, but when Talbot's religion was gone everything was gone from him. The man became a moral as well as an intellectual wreck, and on the heels of his blasphemy he poured forth a declaration of frantic passion for her that appalled the woman. Thinking him almost sexless, as it were, she had indulged him perhaps a little imprudently, but in all innocence, and he now presumed to ask her to leave her husband and fly with him.

She looked into the black void where his own soul had been and shrunk aghast. Even the shallowest soul leaves a fearful abyss when it is gone. She was not only horrified but outraged in every fibre of her being, yet she was too able, too just a woman not to realize that she had only herself to blame. A woman less strong would have driven him from her

with contempt, but she pitied him. Even a poor life ruined is a sad spectacle, and his own had been a good one. She told him with a firmness that even he could recognize that he had misunderstood her, that he had been mistaken; and then she bade him see her no more.

There was another admonition upon her lips as he staggered out of her presence, cursing her for having brought this shipwreck and misery upon him, but a lingering pride restrained her in silence. When she was alone she sat down to consider and reflect on the situation. What was this man without God? What was any human being without the Divine Presence? She had taken God from this man's life, she had robbed this man's soul of faith and hope, she had shattered his belief, she had given him nothing in place of these things. She had ruined him.

What was her own situation? Her soul was revolted that he had dared—dared! Yet what else could she expect under the circumstances? She had thrust God out of her own life. Would there be no result to her from that dispossession? She saw herself in this moral outcast and shuddered at the sight. What was the fate before her? She hid her face in her hands and at last realized what she had denied.

That evening she came to the Bishop's study, pale, distraught, anguished, torn in body and soul. Her feelings were evidenced in her face as she told the Bishop what had happened. He was wise enough—oh, tactful little Bishop!—to allow her to tell her

story without a word of interruption, yet he listened with a heart beating with hope as it had not beat before. And with the hope there was mingled a great consternation, because he had not foreseen the possibility of such a catastrophe to the poor weakling who had failed, and yet—the Bishop could not get this out of his mind—who had perhaps succeeded after all. When she had finished and told him how, in the silence in which she had been left, there had come to her a vision, the Bishop expected her to do what she did, put her head down upon her hands and give way. The iron constraint in which she had spoken vanished, and the poor woman sobbed out:

“Oh, my God! my God! What must I do?”

It was the atheist who was praying. The old man laid his hand upon her head and spoke such words as carried comfort and peace to her soul. She had indeed seen a heavenly vision, and, as no one can look upon such a vision and remain the same, she had been changed—born again.

“Ah,” murmured the Bishop to himself after she had left him, as he picked up his hat and prepared to go in search of that which was gone astray, “the woman has been brought to Christ again. Perhaps in no other way could it have been brought about. Now for poor Talbot. It was my fault. I must win him back! Then there will be no one lost, no one!”



"My God! My God!
What must I do?"—Page 230

III

It was snowing and blowing that night as only it can snow and blow out West. It would have been called a blizzard in the East, but out there nobody minded it especially. The little Bishop, who had faced many a storm in life, both of wind and weather and of heart and soul, staggered along in spite of the buffeting of the wind and the drive of the snow, scarcely giving a thought to either. The shepherd was after a sheep that had wandered from the fold that Christmas Eve. The "care of all the churches" is a heavy burden and the phrase is very comprehensive. It includes the care of all the weak, feeble under shepherds of the several flocks as well, and one of them had gone sadly astray on this bitter night.

The Bishop's way led him to the poorer quarters of the town. On one of the side streets he stopped before a poor little weather-beaten structure. Yellow letters on a black signboard, surmounted by a big cross, seen dimly in the driving snow and the growing darkness, informed the few passers by that it was the Church of St. Mary the Most Blessed Virgin Mother. The Bishop had an idea that he would find Talbot there.

There were lights in the windows of the church, indicating that it was occupied. He walked to the door and opened it. A few people were engaged in putting up Christmas greens and other decorations preparatory for to-morrow's services. Talbot was

not there. Inquiry developed the fact that he had not been there, although he had agreed to meet the guild to superintend their preparations. The Bishop chatted a moment or two and then went out. Instead of leaving the churchyard he turned and ploughed his way through the snow to the chancel end of the building. Why he did this he could not tell, but all his life he rejoiced that he had followed his strange impulse without hesitation. A black figure with outstretched arms lay on the ground like a cross, with head toward the altar. It was Talbot.

The Bishop knelt down and put his arms around the man and spoke to him. The weather was very cold, but Talbot was burning hot.

"I have sinned against the Lord!" he moaned bitterly, unconsciously using the ancient phrase. "My God!" he cried, "let me die! I am a false priest! A lost man! I wish I had died before——"

The Bishop would have given the world to say, in the words of the prophet, "The Lord hath also put away thy sin, thou shalt not die," but the Bishop was an honest man and a truthful, and he could not say that—yet. There was one thing he could say, however, and that he did.

"My son," said the old man, gently and tenderly, "the fault is mine. I allowed you to undertake a task beyond your human strength, and the devil got hold of you, but with God's help we will beat him yet. And—and you succeeded after all. She came to my house an hour ago. She is a changed woman. Come!"

He was not a master that he should say "Go!"—only a human follower, so he changed the great injunction to a tender appeal.

"Come with me," he added, "and sin no more."

That was why the Bishop took Talbot's services at the Church of St. Mary the Most Blessed Virgin Mother on Christmas Day. And that was why Mrs. Norris went there to meet the new born King rather than elsewhere, and as the Bishop's glance fell upon her during the services he caught himself wondering whether anything else than so great a catastrophe could have brought back the atheist's vanished faith.

"After all," mused the Bishop again, "when I have set poor Talbot in the right way again everything will have been gained."

Eleventh Record

THE IMPULSES OF ELEANOR *

I

The artistic temperament is not usually conjoined with the creative faculty. A man may be an excellent editor—not in the newspaper sense—without ability to write a line. The soul may be full of music with no power of expression. A love of the beautiful may permeate the mind without a corresponding ability to show it forth.

Eleanor Drayton loved the beautiful—*similia similibus!*—but had no faculty of expression corresponding to her feeling. She was neither a poet, nor a painter, nor a musician, although that she was not all three was due to no lack of endeavor. Had her ability equaled her ambition she would have been a feminine Crichton. As it was she was only a remarkably pretty girl, who wrote execrable poetry, painted atrocious pictures and played indifferently.

It is astonishing that with her real appreciation of the truly beautiful, external to herself, she should not have discovered, long since, her own limitations; but such discoveries are, as a rule, the results of experience. There is a merciful—or is it a merciless?

* By courtesy of "The Twentieth Century Home."

—providence which keeps us in ignorance of our own inabilities until some crushing crisis lays the edifice constructed by our self-conceit in ruins at our feet. Age, like adversity, hath its uses, although some rare mortals there be whose conceit in their performances even age can not wither nor custom stale. Eleanor Drayton was young enough, however, for all this to be in the future. What she would be at the grand climacteric was yet to be determined.

There are abilities so great that they dispense with the ordinary means of achievement. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a self-made man, or woman, but there are those to whom the definition applies with considerable appositeness. Talent supplies experience.

Eleanor Drayton was not that kind of a girl, and it is only fair to say that she had been totally without the advantages that a fine environment may bestow. Otherwise she might have painted better pictures—at least she would have learned the rudiments of drawing; she might have written better poetry—at least she would have known prosody, syntax, versification, and rhythm; she might have played more acceptably—at least she could have mastered the art of fingering and surmounted the ordinary difficulties of the piano; she might even have been taught to expand her voice, which was beautiful in conversation, into at least acceptable song. All these things might have happened if she had enjoyed the privilege of competent instruction upon her natural basis of elegance and refinement.

But Eleanor Drayton lacked everything but ambition. Great are the sins and manifold the virtues of ambition; but as it will not inherently damn, so it will not of itself save.

Eleanor Drayton saw the light, blinking painfully at it as humanity does more or less through life be it ever so long, some twenty years before in a rude little farmhouse on the slope of one of the magnificent mountains of northern New York, where her father managed to eke out a precarious living from the narrow confines of the rocky, sterile holding he called his own. As for her mother, she stopped blinking at the light when Eleanor came. It was a habit of mothers, most inconsiderate of the young aspirant for womanhood. Her love of the beautiful, her desire to produce it, had fallen upon her as an heritage from that mother, whose natural capacities had been dwarfed and thwarted by the hard circumstances of her condition. Her inability to express her imagination Eleanor got naturally enough from her practical, prosaic farmer-father, a grubber in the stony field whence, in the sweat of his face, he wrested daily bread.

There was something fine in Abraham Drayton, however, or Eleanor's mother would never have married him, and, so far as he could, he strove to stimulate his only child to attempt to express what they both believed to be in her. He never remarried. He brought up his little daughter in the loneliness of the farm in the valley backed by the mountains and fronted by the lakelet, doing by her the best he

could. She was ignorant of even the rudiments of the things she loved, yet there was nothing she did not attempt. Self-taught, she picked out simple music on the old-fashioned melodeon; she pictured the mountains and hills about her, never having taken a lesson in drawing; she wrote verses whose sentiments were great, but which halted lamely on different feet in every line. Her father thought all beautiful, so much so that he suggested at last that she go from the peaceful, sequestered valley in which the even course of her life had been spent, into the great world to storm the high places of its approval with those evidences of her talents.

New York City was then, as now, the goal of every human ambition. To New York with her pictures and her poetry came Eleanor Drayton. Her father, as unsophisticated as his daughter was innocent, allowed her to go alone. After she had been there six months, her disillusionment was nearly completed. Her father had provided for her liberally for a man in his circumstances, and she at last realized that she had almost reached the end of his lifetime of saving. Her probation days were over. The high places loomed large before her, but she had begun to feel that she could never scale them. She knew now that her poetry was below contempt, that her hours on the melodeon had brought forth nothing. She fought bitterly but unavailingly against a growing suspicion that the pictures were on a par with the rest.

She had lived with most scrupulous economy in

the humblest way, yet she had seen much although she had learned little. It takes much to impress even minor conclusions on inexperience. Contrary to custom, for they usually cleave together, although she had lost most of her illusions, she still preserved her innocence. With innocence and beauty, although she did not realize it, much may be accomplished.

Her life, as she had planned it, was a failure. She would have to build it again on new lines. What these lines were, in what direction they ran, she could not foresee. At any rate, it was a good thing for her that her disillusionment had come when she was young and while there was time for something else.

She made up her mind to go back to the farm and, ceasing to be a dreamer, begin to be a woman. She thought, with increasing pain, how inefficient she had been in the daily duties of womankind upon the farm. She would banish the arts and graces from her dreams, and begin with the practical side of life when she got back. She would make up by love and care for the disappointment at her non-success that her father would feel.

'Twas a brave resolution, but if ever a soul craved and thirsted for the beauties, the refinements, and the elegancies of life which were freely displayed about it, it was the soul of Eleanor Drayton.

Strange to say, considering her poverty of expression, there was one thing she had in addition to her beauty and innocence which was a fit setting for its rarity and its purity, and that was good taste in dress—that excellent, but rare, thing in woman! She

had one faculty, too, with her needle, and she had made herself good-looking clothes. She wore them with a certain style which was surprising, considering her origin and environment. Her shapely hands were well-gloved, her feet well-booted.

On the evening before her departure she had accompanied a young art student to the Waldorf, where her friend was to call on a hoped-for patron. Eleanor had agreed to wait for her friend in the room opening from the corridor which gives entrance to the dining-room, irreverently known as "Peacock Alley." She liked to sit and watch the procession of gorgeously and beautifully attired women with their meek male attendants, whom sometimes it would have been difficult to differentiate from the haughty tribute-taking waiters, had it not been for their imperious feminine companions.

Whether it was fashionable or not she could not tell. Whether there was culture and refinement and ability to match the display was a problem that her inexperience could hardly solve, although she had her suspicions; but that it was beautiful no one could deny.

She had the requisite imagination for any mental achievement, and she was dreaming a strange dream there, on this last night before her departure. She was rudely awakened from it by the sharp voice of a bell-boy, self-importantly threading his way through the chairs crowded with observers. She had heard these bell-boys again and again, but this one attracted her particularly, because he was calling her name—

more than that, her number. She lived in a little hall bedroom in a flat at 282 East Thirty-third Street.

"Miss Drayton, No. 282. Miss Drayton!" cried the boy.

Instinctively she touched him as he passed. What could he want of her? The boy stopped.

"Beg pardon, but are you Miss Drayton?"

"I am."

"Card for you, ma'am," he said briefly, presenting his little silver salver.

She took the card and read the name, "Mr. Brewer Phillips."

"The gentleman is in one of the small reception rooms on the first floor up, ma'am," said the boy. "Shall I take you there?"

Scarcely comprehending the situation, the girl nodded, rose, and followed the boy. She was in the elevator in a moment. One swift glance at its mirrored sides—she would not have been a woman without that—reassured her. Her neat street dress of dark blue, set off her pale, clear face, into which the unusual incident had brought a touch of color. It was an adventure. Who could Mr. Brewer Phillips be, and what could he want with her? She had little time for reflection, however, for the elevator stopped, and the boy ushered her into one of the small rooms, which she entered, card in hand.

A man of perhaps thirty-five, sitting in one of the large chairs, rose instantly and looked at her indifferently. He was about to turn away, when he perceived that she had a card in her hand and was

approaching him. He stopped, and, after a step or two, she stopped also and looked at him.

He was one of the finest specimens of manhood she had ever seen, and his evening dress, even to a more experienced and critical eye than that of the simple country girl, was perfect. There was no effeminacy or softness about his appearance either. He had that keen, brilliant, "I will be master of the world" expression which the successful New Yorker, especially if he happen to have birth and breeding behind his achievements, exhibits more powerfully than any one else. He held a letter in his hand.

The pause between them threatened to grow embarrassing. Divining that the young woman before him was unused to the ways of society, he ventured:

"Pardon me, you are looking for some one? May I assist you?"

"Yes," said the girl, reading from the card, "for Mr. Brewer Phillips."

Mr. Brewer Phillips, albeit he was a veteran and experienced man of the world, thought he had never heard his name so exquisitely pronounced. There was a quality in Eleanor Drayton's voice that caught his attention. He looked more closely at her and saw that she was beautiful, not with the clear, cold brilliancy of the women of his world, but with the sweetness and freshness of a wild rose.

"I am Mr. Phillips," he responded, bowing gravely.

"They said—the bell-boy, that is—that you wanted to see me. I am Miss Drayton."

In spite of himself, the man started. A look of surprise came into his face.

"Miss Eleanor Drayton?"

"Yes."

There was another pause. Mr. Phillips stood deliberating. Finally he came to a resolution. In accordance with his decision he extended his hand with the letter.

"I have a letter of introduction to you."

"To me?" asked the girl, in bewilderment.

"To Miss Eleanor Drayton."

Sure enough, there was her name written in bold characters on a very smart looking envelope which he held out to her. What could it mean? Mechanically she took it, opened it, and slowly read:

"Dearest Eleanor:—This will be handed to you by Brewer Phillips, one of Jack's college chums, and one of the finest fellows in New York. I did not know until the other day that you were in New York, and I so much want you to meet Brewer. He has promised me to be awfully nice to you for Jack's and my sake. After he sees you I am sure he will be for your own. Have a good time with him, my dear, and tell me all about it when you come home.

Devotedly, BLANCHE."

There had been an unfortunate mistake. She knew no Blanche, she knew no Jack. The letter was not intended for her. There must be another

Eleanor Drayton. She was dreadfully embarrassed. As a preliminary to explaining the mistake, she began:

"I am glad to make your acquaintance, Mr. Phillips, but——"

"The pleasure is mine," interrupted the man, "and since I have seen you I have a quarrel with fate."

"Why so?"

"The letter should have been received a week ago, but I was off on my yacht on an end-of-the-season cruise, and didn't go back to the office until this afternoon. When do you return home?"

"To-morrow."

"Well, there is time for me to do something for you."

"Thank you, but I return home to-morrow. And, Mr. Phillips, let me explain."

"Oh, never mind! I have a box for the opera to-night. You know Eames sings in 'Tosca,' and I should like to take you. Will you go with me? I'll take good care of you and return you safely. I want to make it pleasant for you in some way."

A temptation sprang suddenly into Eleanor's mind. Her last night in New York. She had never seen grand opera. Why not? He did not ask her if she knew Jack and Blanche. His invitation was evidently earnest and for herself. Why not accept? She might as well have the pleasure with the penalty of an adventure. She knew that people ordinarily dressed extravagantly for the opera, but there

was one dainty white dress she had made herself, which she had copied from one she saw in a Fifth Avenue shop window, that might do. Certainly there were few seamstresses who could "whip and roll" and ply the needle to such advantage as she. Her dress would be all right, and—well—— On a sudden her good sense seemed to abandon her, and before she recognized what she was doing, she had accepted.

"It's a quarter to eight now. You have had your dinner?"

She nodded, with a vivid remembrance of the cup of cocoa and piece of bread in her own fifth-story back.

"Well, I don't know how long it will take you to dress for the opera. They say women require an indefinite time."

"I can do it in half an hour."

"You may have more than that. The curtain does not rise until half after eight, and it doesn't make any difference if we don't get there until nine."

"I shouldn't want to miss even a note of the opening," said the girl, quickly, thinking of the price she was paying for her prospective pleasure.

"Well, I shall call for you at twenty-five minutes after eight. Shall I send word to your room?"

"No it won't be necessary. I will meet you here."

"And, if you will allow me, I shall send you some flowers."

"Don't send. Please bring them."

She began to recognize into what deep water her

acceptance was thrusting her—but still she had not the courage to explain.

“And you will be ready at the appointed time?”

“I surely will. Good-by,” answered the girl.

She returned to the lobby to find that her friend had finished her call; then in her company she went east along Thirty-fourth Street. She did not perceive that Phillips left the hotel shortly after and had followed her on the other side of the street until she disappeared in her own doorway.

“Well,” he thought to himself, as the door closed behind her, “who would have thought it? Such a pretty, innocent-looking little girl! I wonder where the real Eleanor Drayton is? To tell the truth, I don’t much care. It’s a good thing she didn’t fall into the hands of some blackguard who would make her rue her folly. I’ll step over there and find out. Ah, my man,” he said, as he met the janitor coming out of the door, “does a Miss Eleanor Drayton live here?”

“Sure, she does. Thank ye, sor,” replied the man, touching his hat, as a coin was slipped into his hand. “There’s a young leddy by that name boardin’ with the family that owns the flat on the fifth floor.”

“That’s not quite so bad, then; it is her real name, anyway. I see how it happened,” soliloquized Phillips, as he went toward the hotel. “Now for the opera! That girl certainly moves me strangely.”

All of which goes to show, that even the most indurated veteran, in spite of his assurance in his armor, begot of many campaigns, has joints in his

harness which a certain keen little archer may find when occasion serves.

II

Exactly at twenty-five minutes past eight, Eleanor Drayton met Brewer Phillips in the room where they had separated some forty minutes before. She still wore her short blue jacket. Such a thing as an opera cloak, or even a golf cape, was as far from her fancy as from her purse. On her head was the same inconspicuous walking-hat which she had worn before. Phillips was accustomed to women dressed cap-à-pie in accordance with the prevailing fashion, and he took in the incongruous costume which seemed so utterly inappropriate to the occasion with something of dismay.

What would the people who saw him at the opera think? A country cousin? He was big enough, however, to be indifferent to public opinion, and, whether he were or not, he had gone into the undertaking with his eyes open, and there was nothing now but to carry it through. He stepped forward and greeted the girl with a courtesy and cordiality which were as rare in her experience as they were charming. Her own courage was at the breaking point. It had ebbed steadily while, with frantic haste, she had arrayed herself in her best and only dress of white. Had there been any way of explaining the situation, she would have withdrawn from the adventure on which she had so impulsively entered. But, how-

ever, she had reasoned and speculated, she had hesitated and was lost. She desperately resolved to go through with it.

As he greeted her, he handed her a great bunch of American Beauty roses.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, glad indeed of the distraction, since his steady, rather quizzical gaze was hard to sustain, "what magnificent roses! I never saw any such flowers as these before, except in the shop-windows here in New York. We didn't have them on the farm. We could not grow roses like those on our hills."

"On the farm?" he queried.

"Yes—ah, our home in the country, you know. Thank you so much for them," she continued, nervously. "Am I in time?"

"Exactly," he replied, "the carriage is at the door."

In a few moments, wrapped in warm robes of fur, she was rolling down the street in an elegantly appointed brougham. There was a delicious luxury in the whole proceeding which she had never before experienced, but which she accepted without the slightest difficulty. His manner toward her was perfect; deferential, and yet with a little touch of protection in it that warmed her heart. If he had known all about her, if she had been what she had assumed to be, he could not have improved on it. The distance to the Metropolitan Opera House was but a short one, and in a few moments—too few for the girl, who would have enjoyed riding like that

forever—they entered the magic portal and stood in the gorgeous lobby. In a short time, having divested herself of her jacket in the little ante-room at his suggestion, the man noting with approval that her gown was not only inconspicuous, from its very simplicity of style and material, but that it was wonderfully becoming, she was handed to a seat in one of the parterre boxes.

They were a little late, the orchestra was playing, the body of the house, the parquet, that is, was crowded with people, and many of the boxes were already full. The scene that burst upon her eyes, and for which she was not prepared, was one of the utmost social magnificence. She sat down in her chair, leaning forward over the rail, and tried to take in the picture with one comprehensive glance.

Phillips watched her with a pleasure which he had hardly hoped to experience in that place again; the pleasure that an old habitu  takes in the impression that a thing well known and of little moment produces upon the unfamiliar and unknowing. He had marked the scene so many times that he was indifferent to it now, and while she watched the great horseshoe of humanity glittering with jewels, sparkling with light reflected from polished arms and rounded shoulders rising from exquisite fabrics of priceless value, to which the great auditorium in its noble and beautiful proportions gave fitting setting, he marked only her.

He had no idea before how rarely beautiful she was. The clear pallor of her face beneath the

shadow of her soft brown hair had the daintiest tint of the purest ivory, but now relieved by a mounting flush of surprise and pleasure. She forgot how she came to be there, the strange circumstances of her situation, her deceit, in the charm of it all.

"Oh," she murmured, "if I had seen and known things like these, I could have painted better pictures, played better music, written poetry that I should not have been ashamed of to-day. But there was nothing—nothing on the farm!"

"Do you like it?" asked Phillips, amusedly, yet tenderly—why tenderly, if he had been asked he could scarcely have told, except that the girl was so beautiful, so innocent, so appealing, so honest, somehow, in spite of what he knew.

"It's heavenly!" she exclaimed, "this magnificent theater, the beautiful women, the lights, the music, the jewels, the flowers——"

She lifted one of the long-stemmed blossoms from her lap and touched it unconsciously to her lips.

"You are glad to be here?"

"Glad!" she exclaimed. "Yes, in spite of everything!" unconsciously betraying her feelings. He made no sign, however.

"It is a privilege to me to have been honored by your presence," he replied.

The opera was cast and staged superbly. De Marchi and Scotti were in splendid voice, and Eames sang as beautifully as she looked. The girl listened, entranced. The buzz of conversation from the boxes here and there visibly annoyed her. She leaned for-

ward over the rail, absorbed, entranced, at the gorgeous spectacle and the magnificent music. Her bosom rose and fell under her excitement, the color quivered in her delicate cheek as sunlight plays upon a wild rose petal. She forgot everything but what she was there to see. It was a satisfactory occupation for him to watch her.

And he watched her with a curious admixture of feelings. Who she was, how she came there, he could not know. As to what she was—ah, that was another question. He would stake his life upon her purity, her innocence. These were obvious to the most casual observer. Yet it was also obvious that she had no legitimate right to be there; and that, although her name might be Eleanor Drayton, she was not the Miss Drayton to whom he had been accredited. Well, whoever she might be, or whatever the other Miss Drayton might not be, he felt sure of one thing, that she could not be more attractive or charming than this young ingénue whom fate had thrown into his arms.

Between the acts they resumed their conversation, although it was at first difficult for the girl to come to earth again. She would rather not have talked, because talking involved further deceit and reminded her that she was only a fraud after all. Yet, after a time, she found that Phillips was scarcely less interesting to her than the opera. By degrees he led her to talk about herself. He found out nearly all that he wanted to know. He could perceive how pained she was at the thought of the deception she was

practising, and he encouraged her to talk about herself.

There is only one person that a woman would rather talk about than herself, and that is the man she loves. Eleanor Drayton did not love Phillips yet, at least she did not recognize that she did any more than Phillips recognized that he loved Eleanor Drayton; so she prattled on, forgetful after a while of the part she was sustaining.

She laid her life bare before him. In each of the long intermissions a chapter of the story was told. He learned about her father, about the farm, about her ambitions, and about her failures. She did not tell him how heart-breaking it had been, but that he divined. It was a curious experience for the girl. Unsatisfying life between the acts; romance, poetry, illusion, while the opera was being sung. He had questioned her so deftly, led her on so delicately, that she scarcely realized that she had told him so much. Besides, between the music and the man, she had no time for thought.

It was over at last. How strangely happy she felt clinging to his arm in the lobby, oblivious to the curious glances at her little blue jacket and her walking hat, while they waited for the carriage to come to the entrance. She seemed to have a right to be there. She seemed to have known him a long time.

There was another short drive to the Waldorf, then a supper, the daintiest and most delightful repast that the gods ever set before a goddess, she



How strangely happy she felt
clinging to his arm.—Page 252

thought. It was like part of the play; indeed the whole thing had been like a play to her.

He kept her there as long as he dared. To be sure, there was no one to question whether the girl went away early or late, and he was enjoying the situation so greatly, he was so attracted and charmed by her, that he fain would have kept her forever. Yet he had sworn to himself to take no advantage of her inexperience and innocence, and by and by he told himself that they must part, and bade her good-night.

They were in one of the little reception-rooms whither they had strayed after that supper.

"It has been such a delightful evening," she said, shyly, "the happiest I ever had, but I must explain to you——"

"I must go," answered the man, quickly, taking her hand; "it is very late. Good-night."

"Good-by!"

"Do not say good-by. Shall I not see you to-morrow? May I call upon you in the afternoon?"

"I must go home to-morrow," she faltered.

"But you will certainly go on the night express. Won't you see me here if I call to-morrow at three?"

"Yes," said the girl, with bended head and agitated eyes.

He longed to tell her right then and there two things. That he knew she was not the woman he had been sent to meet, the real Eleanor Drayton, and that it was no matter; he loved her. He did not do it, but he held her hand tightly as he said good night.

"You said it was heavenly to you. It has been that to me. I introduced you to the opera; you introduced yourself to me. You have been a vision to me. You won't fail me to-morrow?"

"I—I——"

"Promise me on your word of honor. I won't let you go unless you do!"

"I promise," said the girl; "now go! I—I—can't stand any more, I think. Good-night."

She turned away lest he should see her eyes brimming with tears, and when she looked up he had gone. She shuddered at the thought of going alone through the streets at that hour of night, or morning, to her cheerless lodging, but it had to be done. The doorkeeper of the hotel stared at her curiously as she left the building. He wondered where a young woman dressed in that fashion could be going at that time of night. Fortunately, she met no one on her way, although it would have been unfortunate for any one to have molested her, for, as before, at a safe distance on the other side of the street, Phillips followed her until the door of her apartment-house closed behind her.

When she reached her room she threw herself, dressed as she was, upon the bed, crushing beneath her the roses which she had dropped there, and burst into tears.

It had been so delightful, the man had been so courteous, so tender, so appreciative, and so sympathetic. She had enjoyed it as if to the manner born, yet it was all got by false pretense. She was a

fraud, a sham! She would never see him again, never! The engagement of the morrow? She would not keep it. She could not bear to let him know the truth, and she could never see him again without telling it. She would vanish from his life as he would vanish from hers, leaving in her heart an emptiness which no memory could fill; in his heart—what?

III

It was very late the next morning before Eleanor Drayton was awakened. She had sobbed herself to sleep after a long wrestle with her miseries, and when she arose her pretty frock was as rumpled and bedraggled as her feelings. The roses on the bed were crushed and broken, and as she glanced in the mirror she was shocked and dismayed at the haggard, wretched expression upon her face. She would not have awakened when she did, possibly, had not her sleep been broken by a rough tapping at her door. When she opened it the janitor, whose affections she had won by her quaint courtesy to him, handed her a parcel. Even the cheery “good-mornin’” with which he delivered it, failed to reassure her.

She thanked him, closed the door, and sat down on the one rickety chair in the room, fumbling at the string with unsteady fingers. The parcel bore her address, she noticed vaguely, and on the wrapper was printed the name of one of the leading florists of New York, into the windows of whose establish-

ment she had often gazed with delighted appreciation.

When she got the box open at last, she saw a great heap of the most exquisite lilies of the valley. There was no card, nothing to indicate the donor, and after her first exclamation of rapture at the delicious daintiness and exquisite fragrance of the blossoms, it suddenly flashed into her mind that they could have come from but one person in New York.

At the same time she realized that they had come from him, she also realized that she must be discovered, that if he had believed her to be what she had assumed he would have sent the flowers to the hotel. The conclusion was appalling!

How had he learned? Had she told him? She remembered saying that lilies of the valley were her favorite flowers. He had smiled at her for being so old-fashioned, but tenderly. She had told him many things, she realized now, but certainly she could not have betrayed the main fact of her adventure. No, the man must have followed her! He knew then, he knew everything! He knew that she was a fraud, that she had enjoyed his society in the place of another woman. That she was not the Eleanor Drayton to whom he had been accredited! Perhaps he had known it all the time! Consternation! The janitor was passing the door again. She called out to him: "Did anybody inquire for me this morning, Michael?"

"Yis, miss," replied the man, "the bye that brung

thim posies, an' last night there wus a gintilmin here, ma'am, about eight o'clock, jist as ye cum in."

The faithful Michael did not know that she had gone out again.

"Who was he?"

"I dunno, ma'am. But he wus a mighty civil spoken man, an' hansum'."

This was worse and worse! He had known about it last night, when she was enjoying his company in that fool's paradise. Perhaps he had known about it from the beginning. She buried her face in the cool blossoms and sobbed as if her heart would break. And she had thought she had been successful in deceiving him!

She wanted to get away, to leave the city, to get back to the farm in the hills. She had been a fool in her dreams and in her ambitions before; last night she had been a fool in her actions. And he knew! She had drunk deep for one brief period of the spring she fain would have quaffed, and the taste was now bitter in her mouth. She would go, she would go that very moment. She would never see him again. Yet all the misery she had experienced was as nothing to the pain that filled her breast at that resolution. No, she would not go. Not until night, at any rate. She would keep her word. She had pledged him her honor, and while she had no doubt that he was quite convinced that she had no honor, yet she would show him the contrary, and she would show him that she did not lack courage either, for she would keep that

appointment, go bravely to him and tell him the truth.

What must he have thought of her? How bold, how unmaidenly she had been—an adventuress! No, she could not face him. Yet she must! After all she could not get away from New York until night, she thought. He had told her and he should know. Yes, she would see him. It would be humiliating, agonizing, to confess what he already knew. But she had this compensation; she could at least see him and tell him that she was, but for this one fatal misstep, an honorable woman. She did not realize that if he were not already convinced of that fact no statement on her part would carry conviction to him. That was part of her innocence.

The manuscripts she had submitted variously had all been returned. There was no grate or stove in the room of course—it was heated, inadequately enough, by a hot-air register—but she could destroy her papers without difficulty. She took out the little heap on which she had toiled so painfully, and tore the leaves into tiny pieces which, in default of a waste-basket, she threw into a corner of the room for the caretaker's attention. Then, with a vivid recollection of the nectar and ambrosia of the night before, she made herself a cup of tea over a spirit lamp, changed her dress, and went to the miserable little art store—save the mark!—on Third Avenue, which was the only one where her pictures had received the slightest attention. She intended to get those pictures and destroy them also.

When she got there another shock awaited her. Her pictures were gone! "Sold," said the little Hebrew, unctuously rubbing his hands, "sold this morning to a gentleman, a fine handsome man, who drove up and said he would take them all. Took them without looking at them, too," said the man, adding fuel to her misery.

It was he, of course. She remembered telling him that she had exhibited them in a shop. Yes, she had probably told him where, in answer to what she had thought a careless question. It was noble of him to buy them, but—he hadn't looked at them! He had not bought them for the sake of the pictures, then. That was crushing! Still, there was another side to it. If not for the sake of the pictures, it must have been for her sake. Yet, how dare he treat her pictures so uncavalierly?

She received the money, at least that proportion that the dealer chose to give her, without a question, returning a decided negative to his request for more pictures. The sum was quite large to her, but she knew what to do with it. It made it doubly necessary for her to see him that afternoon. She would give it back to him.

How she passed the time until the hour arrived she could scarcely remember. But the appointed time found her in the little reception room where he was waiting for her.

On his part, he had been as eager and as unsettled as she, for fear she would not come. He had sent the flowers the first thing in the morning. He had

realized that such a girl as he imagined her to be would certainly be unable to carry out the deception further; that she would have to confess when she saw him, and he had a pretty shrewd idea that her conscience would make her see him; that is, if she were the girl he thought her. Under such circumstances he intended to make it easy for her by letting her know, in this graceful way, that he knew about it and that he had no censure to pass. His anxiety had arisen from the fact that it was barely possible that she might not be the kind of a girl he imagined her to be, in which case all his hypotheses as to her future conduct would fall to the ground. There was joy and relief in his countenance, therefore, and humiliation and despair in hers, as they met.

"Miss Drayton," he began, taking her unresisting hand in his own, "I am so relieved that you have come. All day long I have been wondering and hoping and waiting for this moment."

"You sent me those flowers?" asked the girl.

"Yes."

"You knew, then?"

"My dear Miss Drayton——"

"But you knew I was not your Miss Drayton," she burst forth.

"I wish to heaven you were!" he said fervently.

"Hush! Don't talk to me like that, it hurts me. I do not know what you must think of me, but I did not do it deliberately."

"I think you everything that a woman ought to be," was his extravagant reply. "I understand ex-

actly how it occurred. You gave way to a sudden impulse, and I shall bless you forever for having done so."

"I never knew how it would be until I got here last night, and after I left you—and—then—I shall never get over the shame!"

"Don't say that, please! I understand. It was a surrender to a momentary idea on your part, and I tell you that I am glad that you did it. I did not dream there were girls like you in the world. I shall never forget our evening together. I am a middle-aged man, years older than you are, but Eleanor Drayton, I am in love with you."

"Don't!" cried the girl again. "You would not say that if you respected me. You think because I am a fraud, because I took that other woman's place last night, that you can say anything you like to me! But one error like that doesn't justify you——"

"My dear child!" said the man, stopping the rush of passionate words by taking both her hands and leading her to a seat near the window. Fortunately no one entered the room and they were as much alone as if they had been on a desert island. "Does a man insult a woman when he tells her that he loves her and does himself the honor of asking her to be his wife?"

"Your wife!" cried the girl staring at him.

"I mean just that."

"Aren't you carried away by an impulse now?"

"I have had nearly twenty-four hours to think about it, Miss Drayton," answered Phillips gravely,

"and the more I think, the more determined I become. A day is sufficient time in which to accomplish a great deal in New York."

"You love me? How can you?"

"I never was good at analysis," answered Phillips smiling. "I only know that I do. But you have not answered me. Do you—of course you can not, but will you——" It was his turn to become embarrassed now. "Miss Drayton," he continued formally, "I do truly love you. The more I see of you the more I love you. I am alone in the world. I have a sufficiency of this world's goods to keep a wife. Will you marry me?"

The girl withdrew her hands, rested her elbows on a window ledge and covered her eyes for a moment of reflection. Not as to whether she loved him. She was sure of that. How could she, how could any woman, help that? But there must be something wrong. It was impossible that he loved her. If there were only some test of his sincerity that she could apply. Ah!

"Those pictures of mine," she said looking up at him. "You bought them this morning? Why?"

"Well, for your sake. I wanted to have them."

"Not for the sake of the pictures? If they had not belonged to me, would you have bought them?"

"No, I suppose not. You see, my ordinary business would not have called me where I could have seen them."

"There was nothing in the pictures then, to attract you?"

"My dear Miss Drayton," he expostulated endeavoring to stave off the impending question he was quick enough to foresee.

"No, I want an answer," she insisted.

It was a hard question, but his good angel was standing by his side, and he told the truth.

"Well, no, then."

"The pictures are very bad?"

"If you must have it—yes."

"There is no evidence of talent, genius, then?"

"Not the slightest."

"And you bought them because——"

"I bought them because I loved you and because I did not wish pictures like those to appear in public with the name of my future wife signed to them."

"Thank you," said the girl quietly, "I believe that you do love me. You are an honest man. I will marry you, if you will come to the farm for me."

"But do you love me?" he queried, puzzled.

She nodded her head slowly.

"I cannot help it," she murmured, hiding her face in her hands.

They were still alone luckily, and he speedily found a more satisfactory resting place for that pretty head than those dainty hands.

"Now you will tell me why you accepted me after so much catechism?"

"Your answers convinced me that you were an honest man. If you told me the truth about the pictures, you would tell me the truth about everything. I know the pictures are awful. I have

learned that since I came to New York. I tore up my writings this morning. I was going to get the pictures and destroy them also. I told you before that I had failed in everything."

"There is one thing I am sure you will not fail in."

"What is that?"

"In being the sweetest and dearest of wives."

"I will try," she answered simply. "But it has been so irregular——"

"And therefore so delicious," he interrupted smiling.

"And I'm glad I'm not the other Miss Drayton."

"So am I."

"Yes, but you must come up to the farm and see my father first."

"I would go to the end of the earth for you!" answered the man.

Twelfth Record

THE LEVITE

I

"Isn't it a pity," said the woman softly, "that friendship, which should be so lasting, is so evanescent a thing?"

She struck a few random chords upon the piano as she spoke, chords in a minor key, as if to accentuate the sadness of the thought that filled her mind. She sat with her head slightly turned away from the

NOTE.—*The reader would better not miss this, it is interesting.* It will be observed that this RECORD is unique among those included in this volume in that it is the only one which has not had the advantage of a previous serial publication. That it has not seen the light elsewhere is due to no fault of my own. It has been submitted to and declined by fourteen of the best magazines of the country. The reasons for this declination are clearly set forth in the following letter from a representative of one of the greatest of our magazines:

"MY DEAR DR. BRADY:

"‘THE LEVITE’ is an awfully good story, but I fear our readers are too Puritan in mind to find pleasure in it. We have to be extremely careful as you know because of our peculiar audience. If it were not for that I should be glad to say yes instead of enclosing the MS.

"Yours, very faithfully,

_____."

In one form or another this was the verdict of most of

man who leaned over the piano near her. The room was in darkness save for one of those old-fashioned standing oil lamps which threw a brilliant light on the music on the rack and on her face as well. In that light he could see the pallor of her cheek. Through the long open windows the fragrance of the roses about the porch came blowing into the room on the night air.

"I do not understand," he remarked, edging a shade nearer to her as he spoke.

"It is simple enough. People meet as we have. Their orbits impinge for the moment. They come in touch for a brief space and then—are severed. Like two ships whose paths cross on the ocean, they bow, they dip their flags and sail away—parted, forever."

"What do you mean?" asked the man drawing still nearer.

"We have had a pleasant summer together, Mr.

those who considered the story who were willing to explain their refusal.

I submit to the feminine reader, especially, the question whether or not there is anything in this story which is improper or harmful, which should debar it from a magazine of general circulation. I should be pleased to receive written opinions on this question. In this connection, it will be pertinent for me to assure the reader that this RECORD is more nearly literally true than any other in the book. I received the details from a clerical friend whose reputation is beyond question. The story and the refusal of the magazines to accept it form an interesting comment upon the current discussion going on throughout the country between the magazine editors, the authors of short stories and the public.—C. T. B.

Effingham. Now it is over. I am going away to-morrow, back to the city—" her head drooped lower, her voice sank almost to a whisper—"back to the city," she murmured, "the city with all its evil, its wickedness, its crime, its shame. Back to——"

"Do you know what you are saying?" interrupted the man almost roughly.

"Who should know better than I?"

"But——"

"I am going out of your life to-morrow," she continued swiftly. "It has been a pleasant—shall I say interlude?—but it is over and——"

"You are never going out of my life!" returned the man bending over her.

She turned her face toward him, lifted her hand and held him back.

"Out of your life," she persisted relentlessly. "If we should meet upon the street a year from now you will 'pass me by as the idle wind which——'"

"I can not have you say such things as that!" said the man taking her hand in his own. "The friendship that forgets is unworthy of the name. Besides I—Miss Carstairs, I am only a poor country clergyman, the rector of this little insignificant church here. The life of a clergyman is a hard one at best, and the life of his wife is perhaps harder. I have little or nothing to offer you. I have no hope that you will——"

"Stop!" cried the woman rising to her feet and

tearing away her hand. "You do not know what you say. You don't know what I am."

"I know you are the sweetest, purest, noblest woman whom God has ever permitted me to meet."

"No, no!"

"Yes. And this summer spent with you has been the happiest in my life. You will forget me doubtless, and when we meet on the street it will be you who will pass me by as the idle wind which you respect not." He smiled sadly as he completed her quotation. "But—I love you, Miss—Laura. I shall never forget you! Were my heart earth in its earthy bed it would leap to the tread of your footstep above it. Pass you by? I would give all that I hope for if you would be——"

He hesitated. The woman stood as if petrified, listening to the passionate avowal.

"Yes," she said as she looked at him, constrained by his feeling, "if I would be your——"

"My wife."

And as he spoke the magic words she had longed to hear she suddenly stooped, seized his hand before he comprehended what she was about and kissed it.

"Laura! Does this mean that you——"

"That I love you? Yes! The years I spent in the convent, so long ago it seems, the few months that I have been here—they were glimpses of heaven! I have won the love of an honest man, an honorable gentleman—but it was bitterly wrong of me. I should not have let you speak. I should have gone away before—but it was so sweet to me! For-

give me. Oh, my God, I am the most wretched of women!"

"But you said—I can scarce believe it—that you loved me," he protested, losing sight of all else in that consciousness. "Is it my poverty? My humble position? The life of the wife of a clergyman that daunts you——"

"No, no! I could work for you, work with you, slave for you, and count it happiness, but I am not—not—worthy of you. I am——"

"Say rather I am unworthy of you."

"No, not that! When you know you will—cast me off."

"'Though all men shall be offended because of thee yet will I never be offended,'" returned the priest unconsciously quoting from the Book which was life to him and to those to whom he ministered. "Dearest, I will not allow you to speak so of yourself. If you love me, be my wife."

He stretched out his arms toward her with all his heart in his voice, in his look, in his gesture; and the woman resolutely turned away from him. There was a step on the porch. A pleasant voice came to them out of the night.

"Ah, good evening, Miss Carstairs. Effingham, old fellow, how are you? I saw you two through the window and made bold to enter unannounced."

More quick to recover her equipoise, although she trembled violently under the strain to which she had been subjected, Laura Carstairs turned and bade the newcomer welcome. Russell looked at her keenly.

The hand she extended to him shook in his strong, firm grasp. Her eyes fell before his direct searching glance, but had her confusion been less she would have seen nothing but a great pity for her in his honest gaze.

"You are going away to-morrow morning," he said.

"Yes."

"It has been a pleasant summer?"

"The happiest I have ever known."

"We will hope for many more for you, eh, Effingham?"

"Yes, yes, of course," answered the clergyman, who had by this time partially recovered his composure. "Russell," he exclaimed, coming to a sudden determination, "you are my oldest and best friend. It seems proper that I should tell you that I have this day asked——"

"Don't!" cried the woman sharply.

"I came here," interposed Russell quickly, "to tell you that there is a man hurt—seriously—who needs your best attention, down the road. You must come at once!"

"Go quickly," said the woman, extending her hand.

"I shall see you to-morrow," promptly answered Effingham, taking her hand in both of his own as he spoke, "and until then, good-by."

He could not hesitate before an appeal of that kind.

"Good-by," whispered the woman faintly.

"Come," said Russell, "we must hurry."

He linked his arm in his friend's and drew him firmly away. A moment, and with one backward glance through the doorway, a smiling, happy, passionate one, the clergyman was gone.

The woman sank down in the chair and rested her forehead on her arm. She was fair to look upon and would have made a fascinating picture were it not for the mortal anguish that transfigured her face. There was an arrow deep within her heart, not shot there by the rosy god.

"Oh," she said wearily at last, "it is too late! Who can wash out the past? They never forgive, they never forget—to step aside is damnation, to fall is never to rise again! It is too late!"

II

"Where is the injured man, Russell?" asked Effingham after they had reached the pleasant tree-embowered road which led across the front of the place Miss Carstairs and one who passed as her invalid aunt had taken for the summer.

Russell looked up and down the road in the moonlight. It was quite deserted. There was no one to see, no one to overhear. He drew the clergyman into the deeper shadow of the bordering trees.

"He is here," he said quietly.

"Here? Where?"

Russell laid his hand upon the other's breast.

"You are he."

"I? What do you mean? I thought you said somebody was hurt—that my services were needed?"

"Old friend, some one is hurt—or will be. Some one who will need all the manhood and courage that you possess."

"What folly is this? If it is a jest it is most inopportune, Russell, for I had just asked Miss Carstairs to be my wife when——"

"Miss Carstairs can never be your wife, Effingham."

"And why not?"

"She——"

Russell hesitated.

"Speak out, man! For God's sake, what do you mean?"

"She is—she——"

"Not married already?"

"No. Would that she were!"

"My God, do you mean——"

"She lives in Boston with—Masten."

The name was a familiar one to the clergyman, to everyone in Massachusetts in fact. Masten was a rich man about town, a man whose acquaintance was an insult to any honest woman.

"But she is married to him?" queried Effingham desperately.

"No."

"It's a lie! A dastardly lie!"

The clergyman struck viciously at his friend's face. The latter must have expected something for

he parried the blow easily and caught his struggling friend by the arms.

"Effingham," he said quickly, "it is true. Would to God it were not! You have known me since we were boys. We roomed together four years at college. Did I ever lie to you?"

"It's a mistake then! It can not be! I won't hear——"

"You must hear!" insisted the other man. "I pity her, God knows, but there is no doubt of it. Masten told me so himself. I couldn't believe it at first."

"What is she doing here?" gasped the clergyman, all that she had said to him a few moments before coming back to him and overwhelming him. This was what she meant then. Oh, God pity him!

"He is building her a house in Boston, and she came down here to spend the summer. She was ill in the spring. He sent her here. His checks pay her expenses. I've seen them at the bank. She was educated in a convent I have learned. Her father died, her property was lost. She came out of the convent, helpless, innocent, ignorant, and fell into that blackguard Masten's hands in some way—I don't know the details—and that's all. She is going back to him to-morrow."

He was an injured man indeed under the shadow of the trees, a man who would have fallen but for the friendly support of Russell's arms, a man who needed all the ministrations of the Rev. Alfred

Effingham as no man had ever needed them before, to enable him to survive the disclosures of that night.

III

“No,” said the woman firmly, “I tell you again, positively, it can not be. I am determined to break it off now and forever.”

“What are you going to do?”

“I am going to be a decent woman, please God.”

“You!”

“Even I. I do not wonder that you are surprised. I am surprised myself. But I have decided——”

“When a man makes a declaration like that one says *cherchez la femme*? In this case we reverse the interrogation. Who is the man?”

Laura Carstairs and Masten were walking across the Common at Boston two days after her departure from the little village where she had spent the summer. At her companion’s searching query the woman’s face flushed. She turned away her head.

“There is a man, then!” exclaimed the other. “I knew it!” His coarse heavy face was alive with jealous anger. “Who is he? I don’t believe all this rot about virtue and so on.”

“Yes, there is a man,” said the woman, “a man far removed from you and your kind. A gentleman, a clergyman of the Episcopal Church. When you sent me there to recover from the typhoid fever while you built me a house you builded better than you

knew. I met him there. He came to see me. He even fell—in love—with me.”

“Oh, of course,” sneered the man brutally. “I understand.”

“No, you do not understand. It is not possible for you to comprehend love like his. He asked me to—to marry him.”

“I think I see you a preacher’s wife!”

“I shall never be a preacher’s wife. I shall never be anybody’s wife.”

“You didn’t accept him then?”

“Accept him? I? After you!”

“Did you tell him about our little affair?”

“No,” answered the woman, “I did not.”

“Well, what will happen when you do?”

“I do not know. But I intend to tell him.”

“When?”

“When I get my courage up. He respects me—he loves me.”

“Do you think he’ll love you—as you call it—when he finds out?”

“I—I do not know. I suppose not.”

Yet as the woman spoke, in spite of herself there was a quiver of hope in her voice. There was a pleading note in her speech as she turned to her ruthless companion.

“His profession is to forgive,” she said. “There was a Magdalen once—his Master did. Maybe——”

“Laura, you’re a fool!” said the man bluntly. “The man wouldn’t look at you after he knew the truth. I am not much, but—I like you and I’m will-

ing to take care of you. Besides, you have no choice. It's me or"— he pointed downward with his finger—"the gutter!"

"That's not true," said the woman desperately. "I will go to him. I will tell him the truth. I will appeal to him."

"To marry you?"

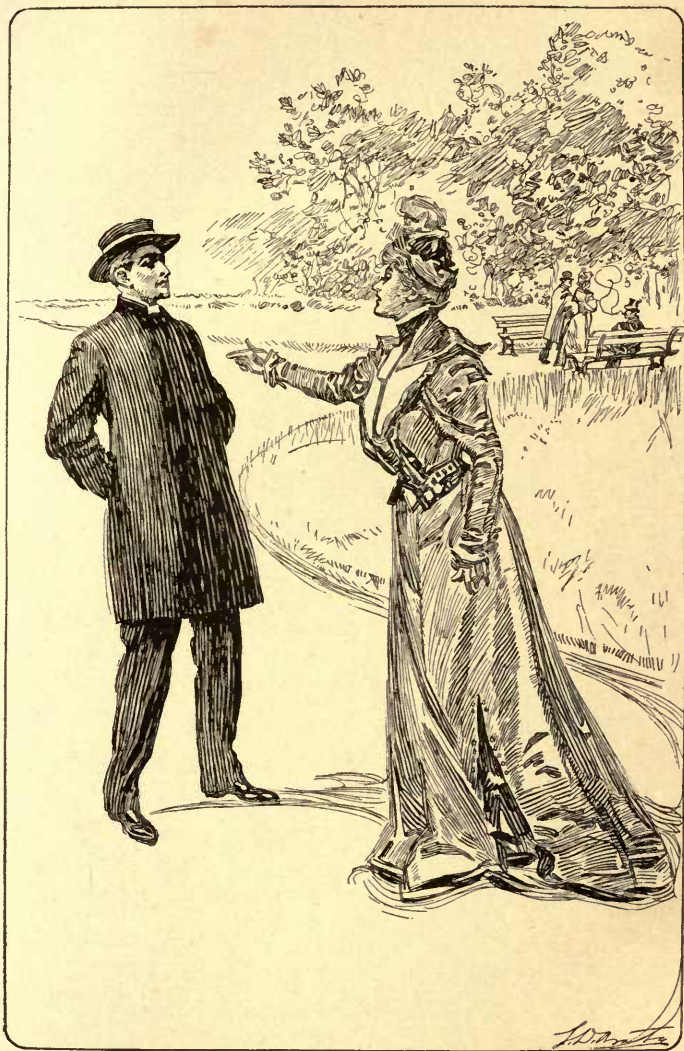
"No. To save me! To help me, to——"

The words died away on her lips. They were near the Tremont Street entrance to the Common. A black-coated figure turned in from the sidewalk and stepped upon the path. The woman stopped, stared, and went whiter than before. Masten for all his coarseness was quick and keen. He instantly put two and two together.

"Your clerical friend, I see," he remarked with damning emphasis. "Pleasant meeting. Well, good-by."

He struck off into a path branching from the main one, walked a few yards and sat down on a bench puffing lazily at his cigar as he watched the two.

The Rev. Alfred Effingham was a changed man indeed. The elasticity of youth, the sunshine of happiness, had gone out of him. Once he had walked with the careless firm step of a healthy happy man, all the fair sweet world before him. The vigor of youth had radiated from him when he passed. He had held his head high and feared no man or woman. It had been his habit to whistle, sometimes to sing, as he walked along the country roads. Now he dragged his feet wearily over the city street toward



"I—I beg your pardon,"
he said.—Page 277

the immobile woman as if he had been an old man. His head was bent, his face was white and drawn. His fingers, clasped behind his back, twisted and untwisted nervously.

The woman had forgotten everything but that he was approaching. As if turned to stone, she stood squarely in the pathway watching him, drinking in every line of his figure, her heart yearning toward him, her whole being, in spite of the stern rigidity of her pose, attracted toward him. A thousand hands seemed stretched out to draw him to her, a thousand hands seemed to thrust her toward him, yet she stood rooted to the spot as firmly as the old elms, swept by the breeze of autumn, shading the way.

It was not until he was right upon her that he was aware of her presence. Startled out of his abstraction he lifted his head. Her heart ached to see the agony in his face.

"I—I beg your pardon," he said.

Then, recognizing her, he stopped dead still, as motionless as she. He stared at her. Was it a second, a minute, an hour? She made no movement. She said no word. She only looked at him. It was a look like that Peter might have returned to his Master when he heard the cock crow the third time on the betrayal morning. Effingham's lips parted involuntarily, as if to speak. A moment—then he closed them. His jaw set firmly. He clenched his hands. He drew himself up to his full height and looked her straight in the face, and turned away with-

out a word, without a gesture, without a sign. He had indeed passed her by as the idle wind which he respected not!

She turned her head and dry-eyed followed him in a long agonized stare as he went down the winding path beneath the trees. How cold and bleak they looked in autumn's frosty touch; how chill and bare and gaunt and naked beneath the cold glitter of the untempered sun!

In a moment he was gone. She noticed that his lassitude, his weariness had left him, that he walked erect with head held high again. She could not, of course, know what tremendous pressure constrained him to this outward manifestation of indifference. She could not understand that his heart was tearing his bosom. But she could, if she had known it, have measured the force of his tragedy by the power of her own.

Despair overwhelmed her like a rushing mighty wind. Her glance fell upon the figure of Masten. She stood hesitant, irresolute, undetermined. Her evil genius prompted him. And there was a certain sympathy in the man's face. He had seen and understood. He was not all bad. He threw away his cigar and came toward her. He even removed his hat as if he had been a gentleman.

"Well, what did I tell you?" he said compassionately. "Poor old girl, you got the cut direct. It was a slap in the face, sure. I'm sorry for you. The sniveling young puppy!"

"Stop!" cried the woman passionately. "Do not dare mention his name?"

"I have no wish to," answered the man smiling. But I tell you the truth. You have nowhere to go but with me."

"Yes," said the woman hopelessly, after a long silence he was too clever to break. "You are right. There is no chance for me. Nothing to do now but go on in the old way. No place to go but with you."

"Come then," said the man cheerfully. "You haven't seen your new house yet. It's a little gem."

He turned away and after a second pause and a backward glance toward the empty path, with slow lagging steps, she followed him.

IV

The Reverend Alfred Effingham was one of the Archdeacons of New York. He had had a varied career in the ministry; a successful one from many points of view. On the whole his life had been a happy one. He had married, children had been born to him, and his home was pleasant to him. He might have held the rectorship of one of the largest churches in the city, but he had chosen instead to devote himself to the missionary field where the laborers are few indeed, and the harvest plenty, but hard to garner. It was his joy to minister to the poor, the humble, the wretched. His happiness had

been great when the Bishop had offered him this most responsible position. For several years he had gone up and down the hidden byways in the purlieus of the city carrying the Gospel of his Master to hundreds to whom, before his advent, the story of the Cross would have been as incomprehensible as a tale told in a foreign tongue not understood of the people.

Especially had his work been among those women whom the world passed by in scorn and contempt. Many a wretched fallen daughter of God had been led through his efforts to acknowledge the universal Fatherhood. He had set the feet of many such upon the right road. His voice had been the voice of hope and encouragement to those who would listen.

Although his home was one of quiet happiness and peace and love; although there was much interchange of confidence between husband and wife within its confines, there were some things which he had never told to the partner of his griefs and joys, and one of them was the story of Laura Carstairs. A clerical man of affairs, lacking time for the contemplative side of the ministerial life, yet he sometimes admitted to himself that his work among women was inspired by the thought of that day, which he would have given all the world to have blotted out when he had left her standing in the way.

Indeed he had tried to undo his action afterward. He had even gone to the length of calling at the house Masten had provided for her. He had sent in his card, and when she had refused to see him, he

had written her. The note had come back to him unopened. Then he had gone far west and labored hard in that needy field. By degrees the poignancy of the recollection had been dulled. There he had married. Now he was back again in New York. And that he dealt gently with the erring to-day was in the nature of an expiation.

It was winter. The sleet was blowing furiously down upon him as he walked toward the steps of the elevated to take an up-town train. He had been down to the Rescue Mission in the very worst section of the East Side and was going home after the night service there. It was bitter cold, and the street which at that hour ordinarily was filled with humanity—save the mark!—was almost deserted. As he turned to the stairway, out of the black mouth of an adjacent doorway a woman approached him. She caught him by the sleeve and he turned and faced her. She was a wretched and degraded specimen of humanity, almost the worst he had ever seen. A neighboring electric light revealed every sin marked, crime traced line in her bloated drunken face. She shivered under her tawdry finery.

“My good woman,” he said gently baring his head as he spoke to her, as if she had been the proudest lady in the land, “what can I do for you?”

Something in his voice sent a sudden thrill through her. She stared at him in the blaze of light. Recognition flashed into her eyes.

“You!” she cried in a cracked high-pitched voice,

releasing his arm and falling back against the iron pillar of the elevated. "You!"

"You know me then?" he asked curiously.

"Know you? Aren't you the Reverend Alfred Effingham, once of——"

"I am. Do I know you?"

There was something strangely familiar in the woman's face, a trace of vanished beauty, a faint far-off shadow of refinement, a simulacrum of culture. And her voice! Where had he heard it?

"You didn't know me once," she answered bitterly, coming closer to him, taking his arms in her hands, and thrusting her face into his. "Look at me! Perhaps you'll know me now. Look at me!" She shook him roughly in her excitement. "Don't you remember?"

"Just heaven!" gasped the priest. "You can not be Laura Carstairs!"

"All that is left of her." She flung out her arms wildly. "All that is left of her. You passed me by once. I told you you would. I was a good woman that day. I had just broken off from the old life. No, I didn't hope, I didn't expect. I only knew that you, a gentleman, a Christian priest, had lifted me up—and I broke it off then and there. The man I was with—he was the man. I had told him I wouldn't live with him any longer. I was going to be a decent woman, because I had seen you. And then you passed me by! And did not speak! Look at me now! Look at me!"

“My God!” exclaimed the clergyman clutching at the iron post of the railway for support, while he stared at her in a fascination of horror and remorse.

She drew herself up before him with something of the old manner, the old air. The years dropped away from her as she stood there. And for a moment to his gaze she looked as on that day in the path. And for a moment almost he loved her!

“Do you see what I am?” she went on after a pause. “It’s written all over me! The lowest of the low on God’s earth!” She gasped out the words brokenly and flung one last bitter phrase at him.

“And you did it!”

Then she turned to leave him.

“Stop!” called the priest as she moved away.

He sprang forward to her side. He grasped her by the arm.

“Don’t touch me!” she said contemptuously dragging herself free from him as if there were contamination in his touch. “You are as guilty as I! Don’t speak to me! Whatever I am, you did it!”

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Two days after that the Reverend Alfred Effingham, whose services were in much demand on similar occasions, was called upon to bury a woman who had been picked up out of the North River, and whose poor body had been reclaimed from the morgue by her more wretched living friends. As he stood by the open coffin in the vulgar commonness of the public parlor of the resort where she had lived, the pale

cold lips seemed to whisper up at him, as he read such words from the Sacred Book of Life as seemed appropriate to this body of death.

“And you did it! You did it!”

Thirteenth Record

GRADUATES OF THE SCHOOL *

The *Daily Gazette* was at once the worst and best paper in New York. Incidentally, it was also the most successful. Whether it succeeded because it was the worst, or because it was the best, was a question which neither the proprietors nor the public had ever been able to solve. There was sufficient uncertainty about it to render it inadvisable either to elevate it or to degrade it, so long as it continued to succeed.

Of course the decision as to the character of a paper depended upon the point of view. The *Gazette* was the best paper in that it gave all the news immediately, completely, entirely, sparing no expense to collect it and to disseminate it. It was the worst paper, in that it gave the widest publicity to the latest sensation, criminal or otherwise, with little regard to the canons of decency, propriety and journalistic cleanliness. Frequently, with prodigious emphasis, it declared that to be a fact which probably was, and which was soon found to be, untrue. All newspapers do that, but not with the same sensational avidity as the *Gazette*. There was neither

* By courtesy of "Lippincott's Magazine."

modesty nor self-restraint in its make-up. It was the "Yellowest" of the so-called "Yellow Journals." Its editorial columns reflected the Jekyll and Hyde spirit of the paper. Sometimes the editorials were clear, logical, forceful, brilliant; appealing to the very highest. At other times false, insincere, illogical, specious, sophistical; appealing to the very lowest.

The more reputable press and the more highly cultivated public opinion of the city reprehended the *Gazette*; but everybody bought it, read it, discussed it—even the clergy. In any trolley or elevated car at any hour of the day there were to be seen more readers of the *Gazette* than of all the other papers in New York.

Its principal rival was the *Union*. The *Union* was better than the *Gazette*, in that the proportion of good to bad in its constitution was about as three to one—in the *Gazette* the proportion was as one to one. It always seemed as though the *Union's* people emulated the policy of the *Gazette* and imitated that sheet so far as they dared. In other words, a lingering decency or a grovelling timidity kept them from being so bad as they might have been. The *Union's* circulation bore about the same proportion to the circulation of the *Gazette*, only in an inverse ratio, as its morals did; which is a severe reflection on New York. The existence of both papers was a reflection on New York for that matter. But let that pass. The *Gazette* was the apotheosis of journalistic sharp practice, the *Union* was a feeble imitation thereof.

Not being so bad as its rival, the *Union* naturally mistook weakness and timidity for virtue and prided itself on its morals!

Like sin, there was something in the atmosphere of the *Gazette* that was intensely contagious. It was a marvel how the editor-in-chief thereof managed to keep even half of his editorials above suspicion. Everybody who worked for the paper fell under the blighting spirit of its methods. In its pursuit for news nothing was sacred, no advantage was neglected. Facts were obtained and told no matter what the consequences. If there were no facts the lack was supplied by manufacture. The reporters, the various editors, the pressmen, even the newsboys, all felt and succumbed to the noxious influence of the paper. It had outgrown any mere human control. Its policy was become as irresistible as that of Russia, and its editorial autocrats were as submissive to it as is the Czar to his huge empire. The monster obsessed them, the virus in its veins contaminated their own blood with the peculiar ichor like to poison; reversing the fabulous conduct of the pelican toward its young, the offspring of the *Gazette* finally turned upon it and strove to rend it for their own greed; usually being rent themselves in the process.

This profoundly philosophical conclusion had not entered the mind of Hollister. Hollister could remember the *Gazette* when neither he nor it was big enough or important enough to attract anybody's notice. He had begun as a "printer's devil" when he constituted one-eighth of the entire force. He

had risen with the *Gazette* until now he was a reporter on its staff earning forty dollars a week.

He was familiar with its methods, with its ideas, with its principles. He was a part of it, and it was a part of him. If there was anything particularly disreputable in the reportorial line which required address, finesse, courage, persistence, and a brutal disregard of private right, Hollister did it. He had talent in plenty, even genius, and he was dissatisfied with his present position. Not because he disliked to do the things that fell to his lot, but because there was not enough money in it for him. Like the paper, Hollister was out for the material reward every time. As he phrased it, he was not working for his health. He perceived that his talents were not appreciated. His growing dissatisfaction stimulated him to action at last. After much cogitation he determined upon a grand *coup* for which he planned with remarkable astuteness.

One morning he presented himself to Mr. Wilder, the managing editor, and handed in his resignation. People as a rule did not last long on the *Gazette*. They were either too strong to stand it and left, or they were too weak to be of service to it and were dismissed; but Hollister was a fixture. He had been there before Mr. Wilder himself, and such a thing as the *Gazette* without Hollister seemed preposterous! Yet there was his resignation. In the case of anyone else it would have been accepted instantly, but with Hollister it was different. There was some-

thing so unusual, so peculiar, in the situation, that Wilder discussed it with Hollister.

"Look here, Hollister," he said with incredulous surprise; "do you mean to tell me that you are resigning from the *Gazette*?"

"Yes, Mr. Wilder."

"What's the matter? Haven't we treated you right?"

"You've treated me well enough, but—" answered Hollister promptly.

"Don't you like the work you do?" interrupted the managing editor. "Aren't your associations pleasant? Isn't everything agreeable?"

"Entirely."

"Why are you leaving then? Would sixty dollars a week keep you?"

"No, it wouldn't."

"Well, what's the matter?"

"The truth is that Mr. Hanson——"

At this Mr. Wilder pricked up his ears. Hanson was the new owner of the *Union*. He had recently bought the paper and it was rumored that he intended to dispute the supremacy of the *Gazette* by making use of the latter journal's methods, and where he could do so, of the latter journal's men.

"Mr. Hanson," went on Hollister coolly, "who used to know me back in Illinois when I was a kid, before I came to New York, you know, and who has been watching my work, asked me to be the Sunday Editor of the *Union*."

"What!" cried Wilder.

"A fact, I assure you," said the younger man gravely.

"How much does he offer you?"

"Ten thousand a year," returned Hollister calmly.

"Whew!" exclaimed Wilder.

"So you see," went on the reporter with all the cool assurance of his class, "while I like you all and shall be awfully sorry to leave the *Gazette* I can't afford to refuse an offer like that for a forty-dollar-a-week reporter's job, or even for the sixty dollars which you so generously offered me a minute ago, which was very kind of you. Hence my resignation. Will you see that it is accepted at once, sir?"

"Hold on a minute, Hollister!" said Wilder. "I don't mind telling you that Maxey, our Sunday Editor, isn't quite up to the mark. He's let a lot of chances get by him for good stuff that's gone elsewhere, and the Sunday edition doesn't quite average up to the rest of the *Gazette's* sales. Now, if I make you an offer of, say, one thousand dollars a month, twelve thousand a year, wouldn't you just as soon stay with us as go over to the *Union*?"

"Frankly, Mr. Wilder, I'd very much rather stay here than go anywhere. I would have stayed here for less than the *Union* offered me, but now it's too late," answered Hollister, his pulses bounding.

"Too late? How's that?"

"I saw Mr. Hanson yesterday and told him that as soon as I resigned from here I would accept his offer."

"Well, you haven't resigned. That is, your resignation isn't accepted and——"

"Well, I might get out of the thing on that technicality," returned Hollister meekly; "but it doesn't seem exactly square. We of the *Gazette* have to exhibit an example of honest and honorable journalism to the world, you know, sir. You taught us that yourself."

That fiction about honorable journalism was one of the Shibboleths of the *Gazette*, and, although both Hollister and Wilder knew it to be a lie, they both nodded gravely as if it were a settled thing, which no contingency or emergency could disturb.

"Of course, of course," answered Wilder. "I see. You're quite right."

His agreement was so hearty that, for the moment, Hollister's confidence in the success of his scheme failed him, and something like consternation came into his breast. However, he said nothing. Mr. Wilder, after a momentary hesitation, finally rose.

"Just wait here, Hollister," he said leaving the room.

He had a brief conversation in the private office with McKirk, the owner of the paper. To this consultation the editor-in-chief was summoned. It was promptly decided that if Hollister was worth ten thousand dollars to the *Union* he must be worth twelve thousand to the *Gazette*. He must be retained at all hazards.

"What will become of Maxey?" asked the editor-

in-chief, who, because half of his editorials were good, really had some conscience left.

"He'll have to go," said the owner briefly and indifferently, "a man who can't keep up with the procession has no place on our paper. We want only the best all the time."

Unless Maxey had been prudent and had laid aside something for his old age, this doomed him to beggary, for no one who was discharged from the *Gazette* could ever find employment on any other paper, especially if he had been identified long enough with that paper to have imbibed its pernicious methods. But that was a matter of small moment to anybody on the *Gazette*. Everyone who worked for the paper realized the state of affairs and only entered its service because of the extravagance of its salaries while they lasted.

"I have consulted the 'old man,'" said Wilder after he returned to Hollister, "and he says that my tentative offer holds good. If you can get your release from Hanson we'll give you twelve thousand a year to act as Editor of our Sunday edition."

"I'm afraid it's no go," said Hollister with well simulated dejection.

"At least you can try it," urged Wilder.

"Yes, I suppose I can." He pulled out his watch. "I'm going to lunch with Mr. Hanson this afternoon at half after one, it's almost that now. If he'll let me off, all right. If he won't—I wish you had spoken earlier, but, really——"

"I'll have the contract drawn up any way, Hol-



"Well, sir?" asked Mr. Wilder, expectantly.—Page 293

lister," said Wilder briskly. "We don't want to lose you," he added with flattering emphasis on the last word.

"Thank you, sir. Good morning," returned Hollister, going out sadly as if overwhelmed with fear that Hanson would not release him.

After giving instructions as to the drawing up of the contract a sudden thought struck Mr. Wilder. He hastily summoned one of his confidential clerks.

"Mr. Richards," he said quickly to him, "you know Mr. Hollister of course?"

"Certainly, sir."

"He's going to lunch with Mr. Hanson of the *Union* at half after one. I want you to follow him wherever he goes, without being seen yourself, of course. Don't let him escape your observation for a moment, and let me know as soon as you can just what his movements are till he gets back here."

"Yes, sir."

About half after two o'clock Hollister came back to the office of the *Gazette*, and presented himself to the managing editor.

"Well, sir?" asked Mr. Wilder expectantly.

"I am happy to say," said Hollister pleasantly, "that Mr. Hanson most kindly released me."

"Good!"

"He said he wouldn't stand in my light and——"

"Here are the yearly contracts," said Wilder handing them over. He was very busy and he had no time to waste in useless discussion. The thing was settled and he wanted to get rid of it. "They have

been signed on our part. All you have to do is to sign them and the thing's done."

Hastily looking them over to see that they were in order Hollister affixed his signature, and immediately received the congratulations of the managing editor.

"You can occupy Mr. Maxey's office at once," said that functionary.

"Has he been notified?"

"He hasn't come down yet, but I'll have him informed just as soon as he enters the building. As it's Thursday now and getting late you'd better jump in and take a look at the make-up of next Sunday's paper. I shall not expect much from you for the first week, you understand, but there must be a marked improvement after that!"

"There will be," answered Hollister confidently, bowing himself out.

As he did so Mr. Wilder suddenly recollected the errand upon which he had despatched his confidential clerk. Ringing the bell he asked the messenger if Mr. Richards had returned.

"Not yet, sir," was the answer, but while the messenger was speaking, Richards, out of breath, burst unceremoniously into the office.

"Richards," said Wilder sternly, "you're late. I told you to report to me on Mr. Hollister's movements immediately he returned. He has been here for the last ten minutes. You should have preceded him."

"He fooled me, sir!" gasped out Richards. "He

got into a cab and got out on the other side, and I followed the cab until it stopped before I found out——”

“So you allowed yourself to be taken in by that stale old trick, did you?” sneered Wilder. “Um! Well, what have you to report?”

“Hollister went down to the Park Row restaurant after he left you——”

“Ah! And lunched with Mr. Hanson?”

“No, sir, he lunched alone.”

“He did? Didn’t he see Mr. Hanson?”

“He didn’t see anyone. He sat there in the restaurant smoking a cigar and reading a paper after lunch until after two.”

“Are you sure?”

“Perfectly sure. I had him under observation until he took the cab.”

“You are sure that Hollister didn’t observe you?”

“I think not, sir.”

“You think not! The *Gazette* pays people like you to know, not to think! It is perfectly evident that he did see you and that he gave you the slip in order to get here ten minutes before you. That ten minutes was enough, sir! We’ve been swindled, robbed! It’s outrageous! And it’s all due to you! The cashier will make out your time. We don’t want you any longer.”

“This will make a very pleasant story to tell the *Union*, for instance, won’t it?” said Richards coolly and bravely. “And there are other things that I can tell. I haven’t been your private secretary and

confidential clerk for the last two years without knowing something about this paper, Mr. Wilder."

"Well, I'll be damned!" ejaculated Wilder furious with rage. "I won't have you around me another minute! Get out of here!"

"You don't have to have me around here, Mr. Wilder, but you won't fire me, nevertheless, I think. There's that Washington correspondent's position that I've wanted so long."

"Oh, very well," said Wilder savagely. A momentary reflection had convinced him of the strength of Richards' position. It was impregnable for the present. So, too, he realized as his eyes fell upon the contracts, was Hollister's! I'll see that you get it then," he added, "but you won't hold it very long," he muttered under his breath as he went out. "And as for you, Mr. Hollister, I'll fix you! Think of it! And I trained both these men myself!"

The next thing he did was to take the elevator and repair to the office of the proprietor. To him he told the whole story regarding both Hollister and Richards.

"Umph!" said McKirk, "pretty bad, isn't it? But after all, Wilder, both these youngsters got the better of you, and Hollister got the better of me and the editor-in-chief, too, and we're the finest newspaper men in New York, I take it. Pretty shrewd of them. They're a pair of rascals, but if they're smart enough for that I guess we haven't done so badly after all in retaining them. They're the kind of men we want on the *Gazette*."

Fourteenth Record

THE MATCHMAKER*

I

Molly Clancy was blessed among women in that she had a greater number of lovers than usually fall to a single member of the ruling sex. To be strictly accurate, she had ninety-six adorers who were all passionately devoted to her and were spoiling for a chance to die for her!

The overwhelming number of captives to Molly's bow and spear was not due altogether to the preëminence or unusualness of Molly's characteristics, physical or mental, although in neither case were these to be despised. It was the universal testimony that Molly was as "pretty as they made 'em," and as "smart as a whip." It must be allowed that the testimony was not impartial. The testifiers were biased—prejudiced. Their affection blinded their judgment for this reason; Molly Clancy was the solitary unmarried white woman within a radius of two hundred and fifty miles, and the unmarried troopers of the little two-company post were hers to a man!

Those few women who were to be found at iso-

*By courtesy of "The Illustrated Sporting News."

lated spots in the circumference of a circle in which Fort Grummond was the centre, did not compare with Molly; and this may be admitted without any disparagement of their qualities, because they were all married. The Colonel's wife, the wife of the senior captain, and the blushing bride—heroic woman who had left the comforts and luxuries of an Eastern home to be the wife of the junior second lieutenant, the youngest officer to divide his affections between Mars and Venus—did not count with the troopers; could not and would not have counted save as divinities to be worshipped at a distance, on account of the difference in rank even if they had not been married. There were no differences in rank in the case of the three or four old campaigners, wives of the sergeants, but they were eliminated from the game by the wearing of the magic circlet on the ring finger of the heart hand.

A superficial opinion might be that Molly's single blessedness, the fact that she was the only unmarried woman in the post, was a reflection upon her charms; yet no one who knew the state of affairs, who saw Molly on her afternoons out—she had insisted upon "city ways" even in the wilderness—surrounded by "honor, love, obedience," and troops of soldiers, could entertain that opinion for a moment.

"My dear," said the Colonel to his wife, "why doesn't that girl get married? She's disorganizing the whole command! I never saw anything like it. She came down the walk last night at dress

parade leading Captain Smith's baby. You should have seen the eyes of the men follow her as she trotted along. You'd have thought somebody at the end of the line had shouted, 'Right dress!' as she turned the flank, and such a ragged manual as they put up I never saw! I wish she would get married and have done with it."

"My dear," said the Colonel's wife soothingly, "what would we do if she left us? You know she is the best cook, the best laundress, the best everything, at the post and the only one as well. I don't see how we could get along without her."

"No, I suppose not," said the Colonel; "but I wish the men's opinions as to her qualities were not so unanimous. Gad! if this disorganization doesn't stop I'll put her in the guard house and deprive the whole command of the sight of her! Murphy and Schlitzer were up before me last week for fighting down behind the mule corral. When I asked them what was the matter, Murphy stammered out in his delicious brogue: 'We had a little difference of opeenion, sor, about a leddy, sor.' And Schlitzer rolled his blue eyes under his blond hair and muttered, 'Yah, mein Herr Colonel, dot ish so!' I'm disgusted with the whole lot! I swore that if anybody else was caught fighting about Molly Clancy he should be forbidden to speak to her for the space of four calendar weeks!"

"Mercy!" laughed his wife, "that is a dreadful punishment, John."

"Cornelia," remarked the Colonel gravely, "this

is no laughing matter. Molly must get married, or, at least, she must make a choice between the men of the command."

"Are you going to turn matchmaker?"

"Well, there aren't many things a man can do, or a woman, either, that the commander of a two-company post in the wilds of Wyoming doesn't have to do sooner or later," replied the grizzled old warrior smiling; "and I'm going to try my hand at this. Who is the most likely candidate?"

"Oh, you're willing to take advice, are you?" asked his wife.

"Not only advice, my dear, but orders, from you," returned the old man, giving his wife a rare and much-valued caress.

"I think that O'Brien has the inside track," said the Colonel's wife reflectively.

"That's good! He's the only unmarried sergeant, and he's entitled to a wife if he wants one."

"He wants Molly certainly."

"He shall have her, or I'm not commander of this regiment. O'Brien is a steady, faithful soldier, and if we ever get a regiment together again I am going to make him Sergeant-Major at the first opportunity. He can support a wife all right. I will engage Molly to him."

"And what will we do?"

"I'll order the wedding put off until we get another girl out from the States in the spring. Confound it! I suppose love can wait for duty for that length of time, can't it?"

"You wouldn't wait when we——"

"Oh, we're different," returned the Colonel promptly.

"Well, it's a very nice plan," said his wife; "but how are you going to bring it about?"

"Madam," asked the Colonel loftily, "am I the commander of this post or not?"

"You are with—er—certain reservations."

"Quite right, my dear. You are the only reservation and I have enlisted you on my side. Molly loves O'Brien, O'Brien loves her. The thing is simple. I will detail O'Brien for the marriage ceremony, square the thing with Molly, get the Bishop to bring up his canonicals, turn out the command, and there you are!"

"A very pretty programme; but how to 'square Molly,' is the question."

"Oh, leave that to me; I'll manage that," returned the Colonel calmly.

"And—er—there is another thing."

"Hey!" exclaimed the Colonel. "What!"

"It isn't 'what.' It's 'who.' There's young Stevenson."

"Well, I'll be blessed! You don't mean to tell me that Stevenson, the most unruly trooper in this command, is going to oppose the will of his commanding officer? If I hear anything from him I'll detail him for the best man! I'm sick and tired of all this foolishness!" muttered the Colonel.

"Oh, very well," said his wife, "you know best, of course. This is a matter of hearts, not disci-

pline; but have your way. When are you going to begin?"

"Now. Where is Molly?"

"It's her afternoon out. To-morrow is Christmas, and we shall need her for the tree, you know. I let her go to-day instead. She said she wanted to take a little walk."

"She hasn't gone outside the stockade, has she?" asked the Colonel anxiously. "You know the Indians have been about us all week. They made another attempt to stampede the mules last night."

"They are always about us," sighed his wife, looking very grave. "I wish we could get another detail and——"

"There, there, my dear!" said the Colonel, gently, "somebody has to stay here, and why not we? Besides, we are sent here, and here we must remain. About the Christmas tree—is everything ready?"

"I think so. We are going to have it in the new Commissary Building which has not been used yet. First, the children will get their things, and after that we have something for each one of the troopers. Is there anybody in the guard house?"

"No one. There were three this morning. Murphy and Schlitzer got out to-day and I released the third man."

"Who was he?"

"Stevenson. He had been very insolent to O'Brien."

"About Molly, I suppose."

"Yes. I let him out because to-morrow is Christmas."

"How sweet of you," said his wife, coming nearer to the Colonel and leaning her head against his shoulder.

"Very foolish of me," said the practical warrior, greatly pleased with his wife's approval. "I spoil the men to death, I'm sure."

"And they adore you," said his wife softly.

The day had opened pleasantly. There was a light snow on the ground from the day before, but the morning had been clear though very cold. As the day wore on the sky became more and more overcast, until as the Colonel stepped out of his headquarters late in the afternoon there was every indication of a fierce winter storm.

Well, there was no reason for apprehension or alarm in that. The fort was situated on a little plateau on the top of a good sized hill. It was strongly palisaded with logs, and the officers' quarters and men's barracks, though rude as possible in appearance, being built of rough pine logs, were warm and comfortable. The fort was well provisioned and the storm would keep the Indians away so that they could enjoy Christmas undisturbed.

As the Colonel stood on the porch a man of an erect military figure, although his legs were slightly bowed, showing that he was a cavalryman, came running up the wall toward the porch at a very unmilitary pace. He halted abruptly before his com-

manding officer, saluted mechanically, and gasped out in response to the other's nod:

"Beggin' the Colonel's pardon, sor, but have ye seen Molly Clancy?"

"My God!" ejaculated the Colonel in deep disgust, "you don't suppose I keep watch on Molly, do you? What do you mean, O'Brien? What's the matter with you?"

"Beggin' the Colonel's pardon, sor," said the soldier, "but I've searched through the post, sor, an' she's nowhere to be found."

"What!" exclaimed the Colonel, instantly on the alert. "After my positive orders?"

"Wimmin like Molly Clancy, sor, don't obey no orders, 'ceptin' their own, sor," remarked O'Brien, who knew more of the devious feminine way than his superior officer apparently.

"They don't, eh?" said the Colonel grimly; "well, I'll see about that."

"Me an' Molly had some wur-rds this afternoon, sor," faltered O'Brien, then he hesitated, not knowing how far he might presume upon his Colonel's complaisance.

"Go on, man, go on! By gad! since I came to this post four-fifths of my time has been taken up investigating quarrels between the men about that confounded female! What is it?"

"We had some wur-rds, sor, an' I—she was forbid by me to go beyant the stockade."

"Oh! She had your orders as well as mine, had she?"

"Yis, sor," answered O'Brien gravely.

"And what right had you to give orders to her, pray?"

"Her an' me is ingaged, sor, if the Colonel plazes."

"He does please. Go on!"

"An' we're goin' to git married in the spring, sor, w'en the Colonel gits another gur-rl, sor, if he wants wan."

"He wants a one-eyed, pock-marked, hump-backed one the next time," said the Colonel sarcastically.

"Yis, sor; but I misdoot that aven that kind might be in de-mand out here, sor."

"I suppose so."

"Well, sor, me an' Molly is ingaged an' we don't let onybody know it."

"Evidently."

"Because Molly is havin' too good a time, she sez. The Colonel knows how it is wid a woman, sor. Everything has to give way, sor."

"Um—yes," said the Colonel reflectively, thinking of certain domestic experiences of his own.

"But there's wan thing I'll not stand, an' I told her she'd got to guv up that dirty English spalpeen Stevenson—beggin' the Colonel's pardon, sor. She said she had an ingagemint with him this afternoon, sor, an' she'd do as she plazed, an' I had to go down to me stables, an' now I can't find her ony place, sor."

"Have you searched the post?"

"Yis, sor."

"And the corral?"

"Yis, sor."

"And the sergeants' cabins?"

"Yis, sor."

"Orderly," called the Colonel sharply, "send me the Sergeant of the Guard. "Sergeant," he continued a few moments after as that functionary presented himself, "did Molly Clancy and Trooper Stevenson leave the post this afternoon by any of the gates?"

"No, sir."

"How do you know?"

"Sergeant O'Brien asked me, sir, a while ago, and I made inquiry. But a teamster in the other corral says he saw them going over the stockade where the wagons are parked."

"My God!" exclaimed O'Brien.

"When they come back," said the Colonel, "put Stevenson in the guard house, Christmas or no Christmas, and send Molly Clancy to me."

"Colonel, for God's love, sor, lemme go out an' look for 'em, sor!" cried O'Brien, "gimme a squad of men, sor, an——"

The Colonel looked very serious.

"In your present state, O'Brien, you would probably kill Stevenson if you caught him. Besides, who knows where they have gone?"

"The teamster says they had their skates, sir," said the Sergeant of the Guard.

"Then they will be down under the bluffs by the Big Piney. Send a corporal and four men down to

the creek to look them up. Let Jefferson go, he's a good, steady man. See that their carbines are all right, and tell them not to get too far away. It's snowing. and looks threatening. I suppose the Indians we heard last night have gone back to their lodges now. They're not apt to stay out in a storm like this. O'Brien, come with me. Pull yourself together, man. Come up to the observatory tower. Sergeant, report to me as soon as you get any news."

II

Somehow or other it had become known that Molly Clancy and Stevenson were missing. The men swarmed out of their quarters and clustered around the gates or gathered in little knots on the parade, discussing the situation. Jefferson and his squad of four went out of the south gate in a hurry. They ran along the stockade until they came to the place where the two had climbed over. Their trail was plain. They turned and followed it on the run.

Poor Molly Clancy, resenting the Sergeant's authoritative tone in a spirit of feminine bravado, had deliberately disobeyed the Colonel's orders and her intended husband's as well, and had gone down to the Piney with the reckless and insubordinate Stevenson, who would cheerfully have gone through hell itself to be with Molly. Molly hadn't got a yard away from the fort when she began to feel sorry, and she felt sorrier and sorrier as she went along. Still

she went! Pride, with Stevenson's subtle and persuasive assistance, kept her from reconsidering her intention and turning back.

The wind had swept the snow from the ice, and Molly dearly loved to skate. There was no better skater in the fort than Stevenson. The creek near the fort broadened out under the bluff into a small pond. They skated to and fro for a little while, until Stevenson seated Molly on a fallen log and began to show off in her presence after the manner of the male animal in love. He cut pigeon wings, figures of eight, beautiful circles, and generally arabesqued the ice with intricate evidences of his talent. In the middle of his performance he suddenly threw up his hands, shrieked horribly, and fell backward. His fall was so sudden and so unexpected, and he came down with such fearful force, in a sort of collapse, as it were, that Molly's laughter which had instantly pealed out in the clear, cold air, suddenly stopped. She struggled to her feet and a few strokes brought her to his side.

An arrow was buried to the feathers in his right breast. He lay on his back with an expression of mortal agony on his face, blood frothing from his mouth. He was fairly digging his hands and heels into the ice.

Molly was too startled and too terrified to scream. Staring at him appalled as she balanced herself on her skates, a second arrow skipped across his breast and slid along the ice. The woman looked up at that. On the bank above her stood three Indians. They all



She stared at them in petrified
astonishment.—Page 309

had guns, but fearing to alarm the post had resorted to the silent, swift and subtle weapon of their forefathers. She stared at them in petrified astonishment. Poor Stevenson saw them at the same time. His only thought was for her.

"Skate!" he cried, with astonishing energy. "For your life!"

The soldier was done for. He knew it and she knew it. There was no way in which Molly could aid him by remaining there. She turned instantly and flew up the pond in the direction of the fort, a wild, mad terror in her heart, for Molly very well knew what happened to women who were captured by Indians. She had never skated so fast before, but her efforts were vain. The Indians, a lurking war party of adventurous Sioux, had observed the two ever since they had left the fort, and had laid their plans with cunning strategy. As she swung under the trees and bent toward the stockade, a waiting savage sprang upon her. As she opened her mouth to scream the warrior clapped his hand over it. She bit him viciously, whereupon he struck her brutally in the face, threatening her with a ferocious gesture a moment afterwards. She was half dazed from the blow and speechless with fright. Then he picked her up—she was a little body and he was a huge man—and ran swiftly over the ice toward the prostrate soldier. He joined his comrades there, and after a few necessary details with poor Stevenson—necessary from the savage point of view—the party now increased to some half dozen, gagged the girl,

dragged her up the slope, mounted her on a pony and off they galloped.

They had need of speed. It was already beginning to snow. There was a mass of black cloud in the west full of terrible portent, and the wind came sweeping down the mountain sides with threat and menace in its blasts.

Jefferson and his party followed the footsteps of the two runaways, which were plainly enough visible in the snow, until they came to the trees bordering the river. Halfway down the bank they were met by a horrible object. Stevenson had been stripped of his clothes and riddled with arrows. His scalp had been taken. He was a naked, ghastly, mutilated, figure; yet still alive! He was using the last vestige of his strength to crawl up the bank to give the alarm. They could follow his advance by the blood that had poured upon the snow from his wounds.

"My God! Stevenson!" exclaimed Jefferson, as he caught sight of this new St. Sebastian.

Stevenson had been crawling slowly along the path like a blind puppy. As he heard the voice he lifted his head. He could not see, he could scarcely speak. His consciousness was almost gone. Yet there was one thing to be done. He must do it. Stevenson had been the most unruly man in the regiment, as the Colonel had said. But he was a brave man.

"Molly!" he gasped. "The Sioux—down the creek—hurry!"

"How many?" asked Jefferson quickly.

"Six!" gasped out the soldier.

There was a noise of breaking sticks as Stevenson fell forward upon the arrow shafts. And something else broke then and there which made no sound.

"Philips," said Jefferson, "run to the fort and report to the Colonel. Tell him that Molly Clancy has been taken prisoner by the Indians, and that Stevenson is in the woods dead. The rest of us will stay here until relieved. There may be more of the red devils about."

III

In spite of himself the Colonel had awaited Jefferson's report with deep anxiety. The news that was brought by Trooper Philips was felt in some indescribable way before it was delivered. The officers had assembled at the Colonel's headquarters spontaneously. They all heard Philips' report.

"Gentlemen," said the Colonel surveying the little group who crowded forward eagerly, "Mr. Gatchell," he added, addressing one of the older lieutenants.

"Yes, sir."

"Take twenty-four men——"

"An' me, sor, for the love of God!" cried O'Brien, pressing forward from the background.

It was very unmilitary, but the Colonel passed it over.

"O'Brien, too," he added, "and follow the trail. I wish to God I could send out a regiment, but I dare not let more than that number leave the post."

In an incredibly short time the twenty-four men

had saddled their horses and were on the parade, O'Brien at their lead. Gatchell instantly reported to the Colonel that he was ready.

"They all wanted to go, sir," he said. "It was hard to refuse them, but I have twenty-four of the best men in the fort."

"I believe so," said the Colonel, scanning with practiced eye the erect, soldierly, eager forms before him. "You will pursue the hostiles up the valley of the Big Piney until you reach the mountain pass. On no account go farther than that. Jefferson reported that Stevenson said there were only six Indians. Should you find a greater number, you will proceed cautiously and send back a report to me."

"Very well, sir," said Gatchell saluting.

"Bring her back, if you can," said the Colonel. "But for God's sake, don't lose your men, and beware of the storm! Have you a compass?"

"Yes, sir."

"Good-by."

The officer shook his Colonel's hand, saluted, mounted his horse and the troop trotted out of the parade ground, O'Brien, lean, sinewy, furiously determined, leading the line. Spontaneously the men broke into cheers.

"Good luck to you!" they shouted. "Bring her back. We'd like to go along with you."

Gatchell's party were soon lost to sight in the whirling snow, which was now coming down hard. That was an anxious night at Fort Grummond. The wind rose, and before the darkness fell a blizzard was

raging down the valley. The next morning at day-break Gatchell's party, half frozen, almost perished from exhaustion, drew up at the gate. They had followed the trail until they had lost it in the snow, and then at a venture had pushed out to the gap in the mountain, which the Colonel had indicated as the limit of their advance. They had seen nothing of the Indians, and Gatchell had been forced by the severe weather conditions to endeavor to get back to the post lest the whole party be frozen to death. He had only succeeded in reaching it after incredible hardships, and when he had, it was discovered that O'Brien was missing.

There was absolutely nothing that the Colonel or anyone else could do until the storm abated, and their helplessness rendered it the more terrible to bear. All thought of Christmas festivity was abandoned. Outside it continued to blow furiously, and the snow still came whirling down. Everybody kept under cover except the sentries tramping up and down in their great buffalo overcoats and fur caps. Everybody, that is, except the Colonel and his Adjutant. The Colonel was uneasy, unusually so. Again and again he inspected the stockade, each time finding the sentries watchful and ready at their posts. Just about noon he stopped before the west gate, which looked out on the Bozeman trail, and peered into the swirling snow as if he would fain pierce the obscurity to see what lay beyond. While he was considering, his eager ear caught the faint muffled note of a bugle. He turned to the sentry.

"Did you hear that?" he exclaimed.

"No, sir, I didn't hear anything, sir."

"Listen! There! Again! Don't you hear it?"

"It's a bugle, sir," cried the sentry. "Somebody is out there and wants help."

"Call the guard."

"Sergeant of the Guard!" shouted the soldier, but his voice could not be heard in the storm.

"Give me your carbine," said the Colonel, "I'll keep your post. Send the officer of the day to me. Bid the trumpeter sound 'Boots and Saddles!'"

In a few moments the parade was alive with men and horses ready for anything in spite of the storm. At the Colonel's orders the bugler, who had been summoned to his side at the gate, lifted his bugle and blew "Officers' Call." In the silence that followed the familiar notes the officers who had gathered about the gate intently listened for a reply. Sure enough muffled and faint in the storm they detected a response. It was too indistinct for them to distinguish what it was, but that the sound came from a bugle was certain.

"There is something out there," said the Colonel, turning to the group. "Captain Brown?"

"Yes, sir."

"Take your troop out in the direction of the sound. Keep in touch with the fort so as not to lose your way. I do not think it can be Indians in such a blizzard as this, but I don't know. Whoever it is can't be far off, for the sound wouldn't carry any distance in this howling blizzard. We'll cover you

from the fort, and should I hear any firing I'll send out half of the remaining troop."

In a moment Brown's troop were staggering through the open gate. They deployed in line, taking good distance to cover a wide stretch of country, and slowly advanced down the hill toward the valley, while the others waited. In a few moments, it seemed hours, the watchers at the gate could make out the snow-enshrouded figures of the cavalry coming back. They stared at the horses and men plodding up the ascent looming gray and wraithlike in the midst of the storm.

"There have been no shots, sir," said the Adjutant; "they cannot have had any trouble."

"No," said the Colonel.

"There are more than a single troop," suggested the junior Captain.

"Right," said the Colonel.

In a few moments Captain Brown rode up to the gate in advance of his troop and dismounted. Brushing the snow from his eyes, with his gloved hand he saluted.

"I have to report, sir, that I have picked up a sergeant and three troopers of E Troop from Fort Bingham."

"Yes?" said the Colonel interrogatively.

"They were escorting the Bishop, who came over here to spend Christmas with us and——"

In spite of his soldierly impassivity and immobility the Colonel started forward.

"Did they see anything of——"

"They've got her with them," said Brown.
"They're bringing her along. I hurried ahead."

"Is——"

"Well and unharmed, sir."

"And O'Brien?"

"He's with them, too."

How the news got back from the officers to the men nobody ever knew; nobody ever inquired, that is, but however that might be, it reached the men almost as soon as it reached the Colonel himself. Such a cheer went up from the troopers standing by their horses on the parade, as the Bishop and O'Brien dismounted from their horses and half carried, half led a drooping figure—Molly Clancy—through the gate, as sufficed for a moment to drown even the deeper diapason of the storm.

IV

The gates were closed, the troopers dismounted, the horses stabled, the officers with the Bishop, Molly Clancy and Sergeant O'Brien, were gathered in the big hall of the Colonel's quarters.

"Now," said the Colonel very sternly, "Molly, what happened to you?"

"Ef ye plaze, sor," said Molly, "afther they killed poor Misther Stavenson——"

"Trooper Stevenson," corrected the Colonel.

"Yis, sor. They tuk me an' beyant tyin' me tight they didn't ha'rm me. They put me on a pony an' we galloped down the valley. I was that skeered

I thought I'd die of fright, sor; but I kep' me eyes open, an' I knowed we was a'headin' fer the gap. Ef they got beyant that I was lost; I was prayin', sor, to the Blessed Virgin Mary, an' all the ither saints all the time. Yer right riverence knows how 't would be?" She turned to the Bishop.

The little Bishop didn't pray in that way, but he nodded his head in full comprehension and sympathy.

"An' sure an' they heard me," continued Molly, "fer the wind growed stronger an' stronger, an' the snow came down thicker an' thicker. I couldn't see nuthin', an' thim Injuns was lost."

"I guess not," said the Colonel.

"Yis, sor, they was. The snow w'irled so that it covered the tracks an' we didn't lave no trail. We crouched down behint some rocks at last, an' we saw the sogers stagger by us goin' back to the fort."

"That was Gatchell's party," said the Colonel to the Bishop. "Why didn't you call out, Molly?"

"Sure, sor, I was that gagged I was spacheless; but I could see well enough, an' I was lukin' for Michael here, an' he wasn't there."

"Where were you, O'Brien?" asked the Colonel sternly.

"I—er—sor, I lost the party at the pass, sor," faltered poor O'Brien.

"Um!" said the Colonel. "You didn't try very hard to find them, did you?"

"Sor," said O'Brien, "I was a lukin' fer Molly,

an' ye know they say a mon can't luk fer two things at onct, sor."

"Well, did you find her?"

"I did, sor. I knowed thim red divils had to cut through that pass, an' w'ile it wasn't right to risk the lives of half a troop, sor, yet one sargeant more or less wouldn't make no difference to Uncle Sam, sor. So I hid meself there, an' by an' by, sure enough, along they kim. I got wan wid me carbine, then the ejactor wint wrong, an' I sprung into thim divils wid the butt, sor."

"Oh, you did, eh?" asked the Colonel, his eyes twinkling. "What happened then?"

"Then they fell on me like the starrum itself."

"Oh, Colonel, sor, if ye could have seen him!" cried Molly. "There was six of thim, barrin' the wan he shot an' the wan he had knocked sinseless with the butt of his carbine, but the other four lept at him. He backed up agin the wall of the pass an' fit like a tager."

"'Twas fer you, me darlint!" interrupted O'Brien.

"Cut that!" said the Colonel sternly.

"Yis, sor," replied the Sergeant much abashed.

"Then what happened?"

"Then the Bishop's party cum along, sor, an' only wan of thim got away alive. I mane the Injuns, sor. An', sor," went on the Sergeant, made bold by Molly's pretty eyes and the Colonel's approving glance, "ef I do say it myself, sor, of his Right Riverence there, I never seed a little mon

fit harder than he did, sor. W'y he jist plunged into the middle of thim red divils, got hold of wan mon that was much bigger than he wor by a fut an' a half, sor"—the Bishop was a tiny man—"an' he hit him a belt in the jaw, sor, that jist laid him out. For a mon of pace——"

The room was in an uproar of laughter now. The Bishop flushed and looked very much annoyed.

"How is this, Bishop?" asked the Colonel.

"Well," said the Bishop, "I—I am afraid that, carried away by the excitement of the moment, I—we burst upon them suddenly as we came around the cliff and saw the Sergeant fighting and Molly lying in the snow and screaming like mad—I—er—possibly. I forgot myself—er—temporarily."

"And it's Christmas-tide, too!" said the Colonel reprovingly, yet with a merry twinkle in his eye. "A day of peace and good will. I'm surprised, Bishop!"

"Yes," said the Bishop, "I remembered that it was, but—er—unfortunately too late."

"Well, about the Indians, O'Brien? You say one got away?"

"Well, sor, we're not sure about that," answered the Sergeant; "the Bishop's escort counted fer three of thim wid their carbines; I sittled two, an' the wan the Right Riverend hit, he fell over the cliff, an'—we've heard nuthin' of him sence."

"I hope—I hope he got away," said the Bishop. "I am sure I didn't hit him very hard."

"Oh, I guess he's all right," said the Colonel significantly. "What then, O'Brien?"

"We camped fer the night, sor, an' come on in the mornin' blowin' the bugle calls, hopin' you would hear us, an'—that's all, sor."

"Now," said the Colonel, turning to the two culprits, "what am I to do with you? O'Brien, you left your command under most reprehensible circumstances. I ought to break you, reduce you to the ranks. Molly, you disobeyed my orders, you and Stevenson. He's paid his penalty. What about you? Besides that, you've almost disorganized the post. What am I to do with you?"

Molly put the back of her hand up to her eyes and began to cry. O'Brien stood very straight at attention before his Colonel, looking and feeling very uncomfortable.

"May I suggest, Colonel," said the Bishop with considerable diffidence, being a man of authority with others under him, he knew it was not well to interfere in disciplinary matters, "that they have been punished sufficiently as it is—and—er——"

"I see," said the Colonel. "Molly, will you, if I forgive you this time, do exactly as I say now and forever after?"

"Yis, sor," sobbed Molly.

"O'Brien, have you come sufficiently to your senses to know that obedience is the first duty of a soldier, no matter what happens?"

"Yis, sor."

"Well, then, attention to orders! My punishment for the both of you is that you shall get married at once."

"Yis, sor," said O'Brien, a smile illuminating his face.

"Married?" screamed Molly Clancy suddenly
"w'y I——"

"Miss Clancy," said the Colonel sternly, "this post is under military rule, and even the—er—females are subject to my orders. You will marry Sergeant O'Brien to-day or you will spend Christmas in the guard house."

Molly gaped open-mouthed at the Colonel.

"If the Colonel plazes, sor," burst out O'Brien timorously, "I don't want Molly to be forced."

"Don't be a fool, Mike," said Molly suddenly blushing furiously, "as betwane you an' the guard house—Oh, Mike," speaking softly and stepping nearer to him, "I want you to marry me. Colonel, I'll obey all orders from you or from the Sargeant here."

"Good!" said the Colonel. "Here's a marriage that begins beautifully. We'll have the wedding at the Christmas tree this afternoon, if the Bishop is ready."

"I am ready," said the little man, "and I congratulate you, Colonel, upon your judgment in this difficult case. It is worthy of Solomon."

"Didn't I tell you I would make that match all right?" said the Colonel to his wife that night.

"Anybody could make a match with the assistance of a war party and a blizzard," returned that lady scornfully. "Especially if they both wanted to get married as badly as those two."

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